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**'Whose job is it anyway'? A phenomenological exploration of the roles
that parents and teachers ascribe to themselves and each other in the
overall education of children**

Alan Robert Ebbens

**A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance
with the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Educational
Psychology in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law**

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Abstract

This study explores the roles that parents and teachers ascribe to themselves and each other regarding the education and all-round development of children. Previous research has focused predominantly on the factors behind parents' decisions to become involved in their child's education. This study seeks to illuminate and compare the thoughts and beliefs which underlie the role constructions of both parents and teachers and may impact directly upon the extent and nature of their working relationship. Findings derived from an interpretative phenomenological analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews suggest that both groups are hugely dedicated and committed to their roles and to improving outcomes for children. They also suggest a number of areas where the perceptions of parents and teachers diverge, leading to different emphases on the expectations each has of the other. These differences include perceptions of self-efficacy, parental voice, the vulnerability of children, the most effective balance between support and challenge for children, and the extent of the parents' role in academic education. The implications of the findings are considered in terms of the working relationship between parents and teachers, outcomes for children and the practice of professional Educational Psychology.

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Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific references in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Date:

1/2/12

Table of Contents

1 Introduction and background	12
1.1 Introduction	12
1.2 Personal background to the study.....	13
1.3 National context of this study	14
1.3.1 The local context of the study.....	16
1.4 Research aims	16
1.5 Research questions	17
2 Literature Review.....	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.1.1 Achieving a systematic review of the literature	21
2.2 Relevant government advice and legislation.....	26
2.3 The nature and impact of Parental Involvement.....	34
2.3.1 The importance of parental involvement throughout Secondary education.....	39
2.3.2 Parental involvement: is it always a good thing?	44
2.3.3 Why may parents choose to become involved?	46
2.4 The psychology of role construction.....	48

2.4.1 Natural enemies? Parent-teacher role construction.....	50
2.4.2 'Loco Parentis'	56
2.5. Attitudes and beliefs of parents and teachers	57
2.6 Parents' and teachers' sense of efficacy	60
2.7 The nature and importance of the parent-teacher relationship.....	62
2.7.1 The Role of Educational Psychologiist.....	65
2.8 Parent-teacher collaboration: a summary	67
3 Methodology	71
3.1 Introduction and outline.....	71
3.2 The Research Paradigm, Epistemology and Ontology.....	72
3.2.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	76
3.3 Research Design	78
3.3.1 Methods of data collection.....	78
3.3.2 The participants	80
3.3.3 Selection of participants	81
3.3.4 The teachers.....	82
3.3.5 The parents	83
3.4 Data collection	85

3.4.1 Rationale behind the use of focus groups	85
3.4.2 Development of the focus groups	87
3.4.3 The focus groups.....	87
3.4.4 Rationale behind the use of Semi-structured interviews	91
3.4.5 Development of the semi-structured interview schedules.....	92
3.4.6 The pilot interviews	92
3.5 Data analysis; the process	94
3.5.1 Line by line analysis	94
3.5.2 Initial noting	95
3.5.3 Developing emergent themes.....	96
3.5.4 Clustering: connections across emergent themes	97
3.5.5 Final tables of themes for each participant	99
3.5.6 Continuing the analysis with other cases.....	99
3.5.7 Creating a master table of themes for each group	100
3.5.8 Creating a narrative account	100
3.6 Validity.....	100
3.7 Strengths and limitations of methodology and methods chosen	103
3.8 Ethical considerations	106

3.9 Process of self reflection	108
3.10 Concluding Comments.....	110
4 Presentation and consideration of the Findings.....	111
4.1 Introduction	111
4.2 The Parents	113
4.2.1 Parent (A) 'Jess'	113
4.2.2 Parent (B) 'Steve'	127
4.2.3 Parent (C) 'Stella'	137
4.2.4 A summary of parents' views	146
4.3 The Teachers	151
4.3.1 Teacher (A) 'Maggie'	151
4.3.2 Teacher (B) 'Penny'	162
4.3.3 Teacher (C) 'Eleanor'	171
4.3.4 A summary of teachers'views.....	181
4.4 Concluding comments.....	187
5 Discussion of findings.....	188
5.1 Introduction	188
5.2 Addressing the research questions	188

5.2.1 Research question 1.....189

5.2.2 Research question 2:..... 194

5.2 3 Research question 3..... 196

5.2.4 Research question 4:..... 198

5.3 Implications of the findings..... 199

5.3.1 Implications for E.P practice.....208

6 Conclusions.....210

6.1 Limitations of the study.....210

6.2 Suggestions for further research.....212

6.3 Significance of the findings.....213

6.4 Concluding comments.....214

7 Appendices.....216

7.1 Appendix 1 Information sheet (Teachers).....216

7.2 Appendix 2 Information sheet (Parents).....218

7.3 Appendix 3 Consent form.....220

7.4 a Appendix 4a Prompts used for Teacher Focus Group Every Child
Matters Agenda.....221

7.4 b Appendix 4b Prompts used for Teacher Focus Group (Media
Quotations).....223

7.5 Appendix 5 Prompts used for Parent Focus Group (Media Quotations).....	224
7.6 Appendix 6 Semi-structured interview schedule for teachers.....	225
7.7 Appendix 7 Parents' Interview Schedule.....	226
7.8 Appendix 8 'Going deeper questions.....	227
7.9 Appendix 9 <i>Flow of data analysis</i>	228
7.10 Appendix 10 <i>Participant's tables of themes</i>	229
8 References.....	254

List of Tables and Illustrations

Figure 2.1 Distinctions between parenting and teaching in their central tendencies on seven role dimensions.....	52
Figure 3.1 Research methodology design.....	79
Figure 4.1 Parent (A) Jess, themes.....	113
Figure 4.2 Parent (B) Steve, themes.....	127
Figure 4.3 Parent (C) Stella, themes.....	137
Figure 4.4 Summary of parents' views.....	146
Figure 4.5 Diagram to depict parents' views of respective roles.....	150
Figure 4.6 Teacher (A) Maggie, themes.....	151

Figure 4.7 Teacher (B) Penny, themes.....	162
Figure 4.8 Teacher (C) Eleanor, themes.....	171
Figure 4.9 Summary of teachers' views.....	181
Figure 4.10 Diagram to depict teachers' views of respective roles.....	186

1 Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is the working relationship between parents and teachers, and their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and expectations regarding the education and all round development of children. This includes a consideration of their contribution towards academic attainment (e.g. Clark, 2007), behaviour (e.g. Bastiani, 2003), adolescent emotional adjustment (Vandervalk et al, 2004) and children's '*all round personal development*' (Hunt, 2002).

In carrying out this study, I seek to explore parents' and teachers' thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and role constructions both in terms of themselves, and each other in order to enhance the understanding of the factors behind their working relationship.

My chosen methodology is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which stems from the theoretical position of interpretivist, phenomenological epistemology and is concerned with how individuals make sense of the world around them. The study was conducted in the urban, unitary authority which has facilitated my placement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). The participants were parents and teachers from a single, typical secondary school setting within the authority which, during the course of the study, has changed to Academy status.

This present chapter serves a number of purposes in clarifying for the reader the background and context of this particular study. These are:

- To briefly introduce the personal background to this study.
- To discuss the national and local context and significance of this study.
- To identify the research aims of this study and the questions it seeks to answer.
- To provide an outline of the remainder of the dissertation.

1.2 Personal background to the study

My interest in working with parents stems from my previous role as an Area Parent Support Adviser (APSA) within the local authority. As such, I had an overall responsibility for the development and delivery of parenting programmes in ten Primary schools in a relatively deprived area of the city, a vital aspect of which was working closely with parents to find out which areas were of particular interest to them. Through my voluntary work with the city's Multi Agency Support Team (MAST), I also became aware of the pivotal role played by parents and the imperative to include them fully in any initiative or intervention involving their children.

Parents are the first educators. They play a crucial part in shaping their personalities and attitudes. They continue to have a powerful influence over them throughout their school years' (Elton Report, 1989 p.133)

Although the quotation from the Elton Report (above) was made over twenty years ago, its implications remain as pertinent as ever, and were restated succinctly by Clark in 2007:

'Parental interest in a child's education is the single greatest predictor of achievement at age 16' (Clark, 2007 p.2)

Following a successful application to the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (D.Ed.Psy) course at the University of Bristol, I was fortunate to be placed with my local authority for all three years of training, where my placement has been split equally between the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and Parent Partnership Service (PPS). This has allowed me to continue to work closely with parents both within educational and wider community settings.

As a TEP, guidance is offered that the topic of a dissertation should be relevant to the host authority's needs wherever possible, as well as being of particular personal interest or significance. As such, this study encompasses the views of parents and teachers, and links the roles of Educational Psychologist and wider, Community Educational Psychologist to which I aspire.

1.3 National context of this study

Relationships between families and their children's schools, and the longer term consequences of these relationships, have become a key issue for everyone with an interest in the educational service – politicians, professionals and parents alike...' (Bastiani, 1993, p.101)

The drive for increased parental involvement in their children's education has been consistently promoted and legislated for over a number of decades in the UK (e.g. DCSF 1989, 2003, 2007, 2008; DfE 2011; DfEE 1988 1997; DfES 2004). This legislation has seen a gradual shift in the

perception of parents, from an emphasis on 'deficit' parenting (e.g. Tizard and Hughes, 1984) in the 1960's, to an emerging perception that parents could make a positive difference, and the empowerment paradigm (Appleton and Minchon, 1991) of the 1990's, which sought to *"empower parents to assume and perform their various roles more effectively"* (Kellaghan et al, 1993, cited by Shepard and Rose, 1995).

In the latest Green Paper 'Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability (DfE, 2011), the language and perception of parental involvement has changed to the extent that parents are to be *'given control'* (p.4) over many areas of their children's education, including choice of school and personal budgets.

This proposed increase in involvement and influence for parents, however, begs a number of questions. Firstly, as addressed by Harris and Goodall (2007), do parents know they matter? Are they aware of their new obligations and are they willing or equipped to carry them out? In 2005, The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED, 2005) published a report which may suggest otherwise, concluding that

'There is a need for comprehensive information and support to overcome some existing mindsets, convince parents of the significance of their role and support them in helping their children to succeed' (p.9)

Secondly, how may this increased role for parents be perceived by the other half of the parent-teacher dyad, the teacher? How do teachers see their own roles and that of parents in the education and all-round

development of children, and how may these views affect their working relationship, one which Keyes (2002, p.177) concluded was ***'the nucleus of the partnership'***?

1.3.1 The local context of the study

The Secondary setting in which I carried out the study is a typical Community College within the mainly white, traditional working class central area of the city. Its students are aged 11-18 and are drawn predominantly from the catchment area. During the course of my research, the school chose to adopt Academy status although, to this point, the makeup of its students and staff remains largely the same. As such, though findings from a small scale study are not readily generalisable to other settings, its conclusions should be of interest to parents, teachers, educational psychologists and other professionals, and contribute to wider understanding in this area.

1.4 Research aims

As stated, the working relationship between parents and teachers is fundamental to a successful partnership between families and schools.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997, 2005) found that for parents, basic decisions to become involved in their child's education were based on their construction of the parental role, their sense of efficacy in improving outcomes for their child and the invitations and demands for involvement from the school. In contrast to the wealth of literature concerning the nature

and determinants of parental involvement, there is relatively little research pertaining to the views of teachers.

Extending the findings of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (above) to both elements of the dyad, this research aims to explore the role constructions that parents *and* teachers may have of themselves and each other, as well as their thoughts, beliefs and attitudes in relation to the education and all-round development of children. Consideration given to the views expressed in this area should throw some light upon the subsequent *nature* of the interactions between parents and teachers and the efficacy of their working relationship.

1.5 Research questions

As a result, the following substantive research questions were formulated:

- 1. What perceptions do parents have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 2. What perceptions do parents have of the teachers' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 3. What perceptions do teachers have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 4. What perceptions do teachers have of the parents' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*

And the further, subsidiary questions:

1. Are there areas of commonality and divergence in perceptions which emerge from the findings?

2. If so, how can an understanding of these issues be addressed to enhance the working relationship between parents and teachers and improve outcomes for children and families?

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are as follows:

- Chapter 2. Literature review
- Chapter 3. Methodology
- Chapter 4. Presentation and discussion of the findings
- Chapter 5. Discussion of findings
- Chapter 6. Conclusions

I shall now take a focused and critical look at the literature relevant to this study.

2. 0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the following chapter, I will consider the importance and current nature of the working relationship between schools and parents, one which has been consistently promoted and legislated for over a number of decades in the UK (e.g. DCSF 2003, 2008; DfE 2011, DfEE 1988 1997; DfES 2004;), arguing that research suggests a range of attitudes both within and between the two groups invested with the responsibility for making it work, parents and teachers.

In emphasising the importance of this relationship, Bastiani asserts that

Relationships between families and their children's schools, and the longer term consequences of these relationships, have become a key issue for everyone with an interest in the educational service – politicians, professionals and parents alike...' (1993, p. 101)

As with the findings of the Elton Report referred to in the previous chapter, the issues considered by Bastiani in 1993 are of continued, perhaps enhanced relevance today.

More recently, Keyes, whilst concluding that the value of the home-school partnership is 'universally accepted', identifies the parent-teacher working relationship as key and describes it as **'really the nucleus of the partnership'** (2002, p.177).

However strong the case for parental involvement may be, and whatever legislative measures are put in place to encourage collaboration and partnership between the two groups, ultimately, success for individual children may depend on parents and teachers being able to forge and maintain this positive working relationship.

This study seeks to explore parents' and teachers' role constructions regarding responsibility and sense of efficacy in the education and all round development of children, including academic attainment (e.g. Clark, 2007), behaviour (Bastiani, 2003), adolescent emotional adjustment (Vandervalk et al, 2004) and '*all round personal development*' (Hunt, 2002) in order to better understand the cultural factors and personally held beliefs which may serve to facilitate or undermine their relationships.

In contrast to the wealth of literature concerning the nature and determinants of parental involvement, (e.g. Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997), there is relatively little research pertaining to the views of teachers. What information there is has come predominantly from studies which *expressly* asked teachers and parents for their views regarding parental involvement (e. g. Crozier 1999; Harris and Goodall, 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al 2005; Keyes, 2002).

It is my contention that such direct questioning may encourage or promote socially mediated or 'politically correct' responses, i.e. those which reflect prevalent cultural and professional expectations. As such, the data gathered from this research will be elicited more indirectly and analysed

phenomenologically, potentially revealing contradictions, inconsistencies and insights which might otherwise be concealed through direct questioning. In addition, it will compare and contrast the responses given in order to highlight areas of congruence and dissonance within and between individuals as well as within and between parents and teachers. Thus, the aim of this study is to generate useful information for parents, teachers and professionals, such as Educational Psychologists, seeking to work successfully with the two groups and improve outcomes for children.

2.1.1 Achieving a systematic review of the literature

As stated, there is a wealth of literature concerning the positive influence exerted by parents in the education and all round development and of children, derived from studies in many countries and dating back to the early part of the twentieth century (e.g. Waller, 1932 cited by Keyes, 2002) and more recently, such as Coleman et al (1966) and Hornby and Witte (2010). The nature and focus of this research has evolved from an emphasis on 'deficit' parenting (e.g. Tizard and Hughes, 1984) in the 1960's, to an emerging perception that parents could make a positive difference, and the empowerment paradigm (Appleton and Minchon, 1991) of the 1990's, which sought to *"empower parents to assume and perform their various roles more effectively"* (Kellaghan et al, 1993, cited by Shepard and Rose, 1995). More currently, for example in the consultation Green Paper 'Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability (DfE, 2011), the language and perception of parental involvement has changed to the extent that parents are to be

'given control' (p.4) over many areas of their children's education, including choice of school and personal budgets.

Alongside the evolving view of the role of parents, the research has seen changes in concepts and terminology, e.g. from 'parental involvement' (Fan and Chen 2001) to parental engagement' (Harris and Goodall, 2007) and the language of 'partnership' (e.g. Lamb 2009) more prevalent today, although the notion of 'involvement' is often used to describe the full range of meanings.

These changes, as well as the sheer number of results delivered by data-based searches relating to parents and teachers and the need to ensure the relevance of information addressed, has proven a challenge in terms of carrying out a systematic review of the literature. Therefore, following initial searches on PsycNET, PsycINFO and Web of Science using the keyword/phrases parental involvement, parental engagement, role construction, personal constructs, parental beliefs/role construction, teachers' beliefs/role construction, loco parentis, parent/teacher relationships, parent/teacher efficacy, and deficit parenting (each of which were subsequently narrowed to include recent and UK based studies), I also employed a form of 'snowball referencing' (Sullivan, 2010).

This is derived from the research term 'snowball sampling', which involves one relevant participant being asked by the researcher to suggest another in order to unearth 'information-rich key informants' (Patton, 1990).

Following the principles suggested by this method, each pertinent study

revealed by a web-based search was followed up using relevant citations in order to expand my knowledge and to focus in on the specific issues to be addressed. Thus, I aimed to 'funnel' the literature reviewed from the widest sources available to a more focused, relevant and manageable body of work from which to consider the issues pertaining to my study. Particular examples of this were the work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) regarding parents decisions to become involved and the meta-analysis of the impact of parental involvement conducted by Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), both of which highlighted articles of particular relevance pertaining to this field of research.

In conducting a systematic review of the literature, I was directed to a wealth of research which sought a generalised representation of the views of parents in respect of their children's education. Although these proved instructive in establishing an overall picture and understanding of the nature of parental involvement in the UK today, their focus on quantitative data makes them less informative regarding the fundamental psychological constructs which may underpin the parent-teacher working relationship. One such example is the research by Peters et al (2007), cited in section 2.5 of this study. Their report, conducted on behalf of the DCSF, is the third in a series of surveys (DFES 2001, 2004) to quantify the extent of parental involvement in their children's schooling. In seeking a degree of generalisation regarding parental views, the survey, in which eligible parents were contacted via telephone, elicited responses from over 5000 parents and carers of children aged 5-16 throughout England.

Parents/carers were asked, for example, to quantify their degree of involvement in their child's schooling by answering either 'very involved, fairly involved or rarely/not at all involved'. Whilst the coded data gained through this method is of undoubted interest, the quantitative methods employed do not lend themselves further to the level of psychological enquiry required for the purposes of this thesis.

In contrast, the wide ranging review of psychological theory and research conducted by Hoover Dempsey and Sandler (1997, first cited in section 1.3.1) looked into the underlying *psychological* factors which may influence parental engagement, exploring areas such as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2002) and the nature of role construction and socially constructed relationships (e.g. Crozier, 1998; Cunningham and Davis, 1985; Goffman, 1971 and Kelly, 1955). As such, the research by Hoover Dempsey and Sandler (1997), idiographic in nature and focusing on psychological variables pertaining to individual experience, proved invaluable in funnelling my review of the literature and in suggesting IPA as the most suitable methodology for my thesis.

Thus, in this literature review I seek to critically examine the relevant bodies of research and recent government advice and legislation which have promoted and underpinned the increasing role for parents, positioning them within the evolving context of parental involvement in the educational and all-round development of children. I then consider the nature of role construction and the thoughts, beliefs and expectations of teachers and parents that may shape their involvement decisions and influence the

extent and nature of their working relationship. Finally, I look at the evidence suggesting a greater role for educational psychology in family-school partnerships, one which is dependent upon what Pelco and Ries (1999) describe as *'What School Psychologists Need to Know'*.

Accordingly, the following sections will be addressed within this chapter

- Relevant government advice and legislation
- The nature and impact of parental involvement
- The importance of parental involvement in Secondary education
- Parental involvement; is it always a good thing?
- Why parents may choose to become involved.
- The psychology of role construction
- Natural enemies? Parents' and teachers' role constructions
- The beliefs and attitudes of parents and teachers
- Parents' and teachers' sense of efficacy
- The nature and importance of the parent-teacher relationship
- The role of Educational Psychologists in the parent-teacher relationship
- Parent-teacher collaboration: a summary

2.2 Relevant government advice and legislation

In this section I will consider the recent reports, advice and legislation which document a growing realisation of the importance of parental involvement in children's attainment and have led towards the current perception of parents as both consumers and partners.

The positive link between parental involvement and children's educational attainment has been recognised and documented in the UK for well over half a century (e.g. Bastiani 2003; Clark 2007, Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Fan and Chen, 2001; Feinstein and Symons, 1999; General Teaching Council, 2009, Harris and Goodall, 2008; Hartas, 2008; Hughes and Greenhough, 2006; Hornby and Witte, 2010; Katz, 1984; Miller and Leyden, 1999; Skaliotis, 2010).

This research has established the value of parental involvement in their children's education and all-round development, a finding summarised succinctly by Clark (2007) thus

'Parental interest in a child's education is the single greatest predictor of achievement at age 16' (Clark, 2007 p.2)

Accordingly, successive governments have both aspired to and legislated for an increased role for parents in their children's education.

In 1989, the Education Act (DfEE, 1989) promoted the idea of greater collaboration between parents and teachers in children's education, making the case that greater parental involvement may enhance their progress in

school. It introduced the notion of parents and children as 'consumers' by introducing market principles into the schools system, such as giving schools the option to opt out of local authority control by assuming grant maintained status, provided this was supported by a majority of parents.

This not only offered parents an enhanced level of influence, but also encouraged schools to consider parents in their decision making at a more systemic level. As well as the positive link between parental involvement and children's academic achievement, the case was also being made for a wide range of social, emotional and behavioural outcomes.

As long ago as 1989, for example, the Elton Report (1989) into *discipline* in schools concluded that not to address its recommendations towards parents would be '*clearly absurd*', adding that:

'Parents are the first educators. They play a crucial part in shaping their personalities and attitudes. They continue to have a powerful influence over them throughout their school years' (1989 p.133)

Despite this acknowledgement of the influence and importance of parental involvement, the Elton Report did, however, plainly state in its findings that, '*teachers' picture of parents is generally very negative*' (p. 133) adding that many teachers blame parents for much misbehaviour in schools.

This highlights the potential conflict between legislative intentions towards collaboration, and the thoughts, beliefs and expectations of those expected to carry them out, i.e. parents and teachers.

More recently, successive governments have sought to increase the involvement and empowerment of parents in their children's education through advice and legislation (e.g. DCSF 2003, 2008; DfEE 1997; DfES 2004). In 1997, for example, the government set out its strategy for securing parental involvement in England in its white paper 'Excellence in Schools' (DfEE, 1997).

This included three elements relating to parents of children with SEN (Special Educational Needs);

- Providing parents with information
- Giving parents a voice
- Encouraging parental partnerships with schools

As stated, this white paper expressly aims to give parents a voice in decisions affecting their child's education and to be '*empowered to contribute themselves to their child's development*' (p. 6). This issue of parental voice is one which I consider in more detail later.

The move towards closer collaboration and partnership between schools and parents was furthered in 2004 by the 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (DfES, 2004) agenda, which asserts that schools should be encouraged to '*build stronger working relationships with parents and the wider community*'. This was followed in 2005 by the Schools White Paper '*Higher Standards, Better Schools for All - More Choice for Parents and Pupils*' (DfES, 2005) which again places parents firmly at the centre of the

drive to raise standards in education, this time by putting an increasing emphasis upon their involvement at a more systemic level.

Central to this aim were three fundamental beliefs;

- that ***parental involvement makes a significant difference*** to educational outcomes of young people
- that ***parents have a key role*** to play in raising educational standards
- ***the more involved and engaged parents are*** in the education of their children, the more likely their children are to succeed

Harris and Goodall, (2007) summarised the points made above thus:

'Underpinning this policy is the central tenet that parental engagement makes a significant difference to the educational outcomes of young people and that parents have a key role to play in raising educational standards' (2007, p.7)

It seems, then, that those in charge of shaping policy are fully aware of the importance of parents in this regard. The question remains, however, do parents know they matter, an issue which was addressed by Harris and Goodall (above) and one which is a key aspect of this study.

Following this, 'The Children's Plan' (DCSF, 2007) continued with the policy of ensuring that parents become involved with affecting children at a more strategic policy level, this time pledging to put parents' views at the heart of government by creating a new 'Parents Panel' to advise on policies

affecting parents. The apparent shift in responsibility from schools to parents was exemplified by the statement that:

'Government does not bring up children – parents do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families' (DCSF, 2007 p.4)

Also in 2007, the government published its 'Every Parent Matters' agenda, (DfES, 2007) which made a number of unequivocal statements regarding parental involvement. In his supporting letter to the legislation, the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills wrote

'The evidence that good parenting plays a huge role in educational achievement is too compelling to ignore. It outstrips every single other factor: including social class, ethnicity or disability in its impact on attainment'

adding

'We want to create conditions where more parents can engage as partners in their children's learning and development from birth, through the school years and as young people make the transition to adulthood...' (DfES, 2007, p. 3)

From this, it can be argued that the perception of the role of parents has evolved from a deficit model, to one in which the government recognises and promotes the involvement of parents in their children's *educational achievement, learning and development*, from birth to adulthood.

As well as encouraging and empowering parents to become involved, governments have also legislated to oblige schools to foster a relationship with parents. A powerful example of this is the pressure imposed upon schools, and therefore teachers, to achieve successful Ofsted inspections,

with the new Ofsted Framework for 2009/10 including specific inspection criteria relating to

“The school’s relationship with parents and carers, including how well they are involved in the school’s decision making about matters related to learning and well being” (www.culturaldiversity.org, 2009)

In 2010, The Lamb Report (Lamb Enquiry, Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence) also called for a ***cultural*** shift in the way in which schools, local authorities and other professionals work with parents and children, in particular arguing for a stronger voice for parents of children with SEN.

In addition, the new SEN and Disability Green Paper (DfE, 2011), offers more control to parents through increased transparency in the provision of services and the option of a ‘personal budget’ for all families with a child with SEN from 2014.

Although children with SEN are deliberately not a *particular* focus of this study, they number over 1.6 million, and account for approximately one in five of all children of school age in England (DCSF, 2008). They therefore constitute a sizeable and important element of the wider whole considered here.

It can be seen from the above that parental involvement in the all-round education and development of children has been both encouraged and legislated for by successive governments over a number of decades in the UK.

Whilst this top-down approach has placed the emphasis on parents and teachers working together in an effective and collaborative partnership, what remains unclear, and underlies the focus of this study, is whether parents and teachers are fully aware of this new role, whether they agree with it and, most crucially of all in terms of its efficacy, whether they feel inclined or equipped to engage with it. In 2005, The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED, 2005) published a report which may, for parents at least, suggest otherwise. In its qualitative exploration of parents' views on improving parental involvement in children's education across age ranges from pre to post school and across geographical and socio-economic boundaries, it found that in terms of current perceptions and expectations of involvement:

- There is a variety of perceptions and expectations about what parental involvement means, and the range of roles and responsibilities that parents expect the school to offer
- The majority of parents currently have relatively low levels of involvement whilst perceiving that what they already do is all that is needed
- Many parents hold fixed assumptions about the division of labour between home and school
- There is a need for comprehensive information and support to overcome some existing mindsets, convince parents of the significance of their role and support them in helping their children to succeed.

Although the findings described above relate directly to Scotland, their implications have relevance to other parts of the UK.

Potentially then, parents remain largely unaware of the expectation for them to assume new roles and responsibilities regarding involvement in their children's education, despite the decades of research and legislation which support this.

The implications of this, as perceived by the authors themselves, are directly relevant to the aims of this study, namely

'There is a need for comprehensive information and support to overcome some existing mindsets, convince parents of the significance of their role and support them in helping their children to succeed' (2005, p.9)

Crucially however, as with previous research, the views of teachers are not expressly considered or represented in this report. As far back as 1993, Bastiani considered the nature of the parent-teacher relationship, concluding that:

'There is a compelling and inescapable need for professionals to review both their thinking and their practice in the light of the new statutory obligations and far-reaching political objectives which permeate school-family relations...' (1993, p.101)

If, as the Scottish Executive report states, their aim is to improve partnerships between schools and homes in order to impact positively on the educational achievements of young people, surely, I would argue, it is

equally important to understand the views of individual teachers rather than make assumptions about them as a homogenous professional entity.

Thus far, I have described the research, advice and successive acts of legislation which have established the place of parental involvement in the education and all-round development of children. I shall, in the following section, evaluate the evidence for the impact of this involvement, as well as considering its relevance to the specific area of this study, that of parental involvement in children's lives throughout their secondary education.

2.3 The nature and impact of Parental Involvement

I believe that in order to understand the current importance afforded to parental involvement in the education and all-round development of children, it is necessary to chart its evolution from the 'traditional' one directional exchange of information and influence from school to home, as described by Munn (1993, below), through an increasingly widening role, to the truly collaborative partnership aspired to today by governments and (it may be assumed) professionals and parents. Again, the realities behind this assumption are a specific focus of this study and ones which will be addressed in the following chapters.

As previously described, Munn, (1993, p.1) described three aspects of 'traditional' parental involvement as it was widely conceptualised at the time, namely:

- It generally concerns only the well being of the parent's own child
- Its role is one of support for the largely taken-for-granted value system of the school
- Collective parental action has been mostly concerned with fund raising or transmitting information, and has usually not challenged the school's way of doing things

More recently, in their review of the conceptual and methodological issues of research in parental involvement, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) included in their definition a further expanded range of concepts and activities. These include:

Good parenting in the home, including the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship; contact with schools to share information; participation in school events; participation in the work of the school; and participation in school governance.' (2003 p.4)

This description differs from that of Munn's in that it confers a greater degree of agency and responsibility upon the parent, both at home as well as in their dealings with the school. It also includes a role in school governance, strengthening the move towards a position of partnership rather than one merely of support for the school's activities.

The evolving nature and perceived scope of parental involvement has, in fact, led to difficulty in producing a lasting and meaningful definition.

Hartas (2008) addressed this difficulty, asserting that the nature of parental involvement and home-school partnerships between parents and teachers is ever changing in line with

'Shifts in family structure and value systems and schools increasing emphasis on accountability and teachers professionalism (p.139)

Hartas further argues that these changes are not necessarily easily understood by educators or other professionals. I agree with this assertion, and would add parents to the list of people who may not necessarily understand the impact of these profound cultural shifts. The implication of this is that the 'politicians, professionals and parents' referred to previously by Bastiani may not share the same beliefs, perceptions and expectations regarding their responsibilities in the home-school partnership.

Having sought to define the nature and current understanding of parental involvement, in the following section I shall detail the research which summarises and affirms the positive impact of parental involvement on children's education and all-round development, including academic attainment (e.g. Clark, 2007), behaviour (Bastiani, 2003) and adolescent emotional adjustment (Vandervalk et al, 2004). In making the case for the positive benefits of parental involvement, I believe the case for promoting a positive working relationship between parents and teachers becomes increasingly apparent and pertinent.

In 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families published its report on The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education

(DCSF, 2008). This report reached a number of wide ranging conclusions, including the findings that

- Parental involvement in children's education from an early age has a significant effect on educational achievement, and continues to do so into adolescence and adulthood
- Family learning can also provide a range of benefits for parents and children including improvements in reading, writing and numeracy as well as greater parental confidence in helping their child at home
- The attitudes and aspirations of parents and of children themselves predict later educational achievement. International evidence suggests that parents with high aspirations are also more involved in their children's education

Clark, (2007) also explored the importance of parental involvement, this time specifically in relation to children's literacy development, and concluded that:

- Parental involvement in children's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size and level of parental education
- Parental involvement in children's reading is the most important determinant of language and emergent literacy
- Although parental involvement has the greatest effect in the early years, its importance to children's educational and literacy outcomes continues into the teenage and even adult years

- Parental interest in a child's education is the single greatest predictor of achievement at age 16

(Adapted from Clark, 2007 p.12)

Desforges and Abouchaar, (2003) in their thorough and wide ranging review of the literature regarding the impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievements and adjustment sum the evidence up succinctly, concluding that

'The achievement of working class pupils could be significantly enhanced if we systematically apply all that is known about parental involvement (2003, p.6)

Whilst the research detailed above supports the need for parental involvement throughout a child's life, my study is particularly concerned with its impact throughout secondary education. I have chosen to focus on the parents and teachers in a secondary school because previous findings have suggested that, whilst involvement at this time continues to be highly beneficial in terms of children's attainment and wellbeing (e.g. DCSF, 2007), it tends to decline during adolescence (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005; Spera, 2005). In the following section, I detail the evidence pertaining directly to the importance of parental involvement in the lives of Secondary age children.

2.3.1 The importance of parental involvement throughout

Secondary education

Whilst most research in this area has focused on primary schools, a number of recent studies such as those mentioned above have explored the impact of parental involvement throughout secondary education.

Bastiani (2003, p.3), in his summary of key research findings regarding the impact of parental involvement in UK Secondary schools found that;

- Children of parents who take an active interest in their schooling, and show high levels of interest, progress 15% more in maths and reading between 11 and 16 years than other children
- In schools with matched intakes, those that do best have, amongst other things, strong links with parents and families: the reverse is also true
- When similar schools are compared, those with strong home-school links have consistently fewer problems related to pupil work and behaviour
- Gains in pupil achievement that stem from parental involvement programmes and activities tend to be permanent

These findings again articulate the need for parents to maintain their levels of involvement throughout their children's education. As stated, however, despite this evidence, parental involvement tends to decline during adolescence (e.g. Eccles and Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005; Spera, 2005).

Hornby and Witte, (2010) looked at the factors underlying parental involvement in Secondary schools in New Zealand, with particular interest in the implications for Educational Psychologists (I discuss these in a later section).

They describe a number of factors thought to be influential in this decline, including:

- Secondary schools being larger and less welcoming
- Parents feeling less confident to help with increasingly complex subject matter
- Parents of children whom they consider to have less of a need for involvement (i.e. academically able or not reported as displaying behavioural problems)
- A perceived need for adolescents to become more autonomous

These recent findings, albeit from New Zealand, should be of immediate interest and relevance to schools and policy makers in the UK. They clearly suggest a lack of understanding both on behalf of schools in terms of their layout and approach towards parents and also on behalf of parents who feel less need to maintain their level of involvement throughout adolescence.

The findings of Hornby and Witte regarding the perceived lack of welcome from secondary schools becomes particularly problematic when considered in the light of Harris and Goodall's (2008) findings regarding parental involvement in Secondary schools. This found a difference in the way that

UK Secondary schools seek to engage parents, reporting an emphasis on *school-based* involvement over that conducted in the home.

This practice is also at odds with several studies which have highlighted the importance of parental engagement in learning *in the home* (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Sylva, 2004).

In their recent review of the literature, Desforges, and Abouchaar (2003) conclude that those studies using contemporary techniques of data analysis from large data sets have

'Safely established that parental involvement in the form of interest in the child and manifest in the home as parent-child discussions can have a positive effect on children's behaviour and achievement' (2003, p.6)

Indeed, Harris and Goodall (2007) go even further in concluding that

'Parental engagement in children's learning in the home makes the greatest difference to student achievement. Most schools are involving parents in school-based activities in a variety of ways but the evidence shows but this has little, if any, impact on subsequent learning and achievement of young people' (p.7)

It can be argued, therefore, that parental involvement is perceived by parents to be of decreasing importance at a time when evidence suggests the opposite, and that Secondary schools increasingly seek school-based parental involvement when the evidence shows that home-based

engagement in learning has a far greater impact on student learning and achievement.

Alongside the role of parents, the importance of the teacher in this relationship was also emphasised by Eccles and Harold (1993), who found that, whilst parental influence on the child decreases throughout adolescence, the impact of 'non-familial adults' becomes increasingly important. Their findings suggest that teachers are likely to be the primary and most influential non-familial adults in many adolescent's lives, with more waking time being spent at school than anywhere else, including time spent with families. As a result of this, they further stress the importance of the parent-teacher working relationship throughout this critical time in a child's all-round development and go on to describe the characteristics of parents and schools/teachers which they consider likely to be important:

These include, for parents:

- Parents social and psychological resources
- Parents efficacy beliefs
- Parents perceptions of and aspirations for their child
- Parents assumptions about their role in their child's education
- Parents attitudes towards the school
- Parents experience of involvement with their child's previous school(s)

And for schools/teachers:

- **The beliefs and attitudes of school personnel, including**
- **Beliefs about appropriate parental involvement**
- **Beliefs about parents' decisions whether or not to become involved**
- **A sense of efficacy to affect parent participation**
- **Support for implementing strategies to improve parent involvement**
- **The physical and organisational structure of Secondary schools***

***Eccles and Harold (1993 p. 576-577) cite size, levels of bureaucracy and the degree of departmentalisation (resulting in less personal contact between teachers and with students and families) as factors which may serve to alienate parents from the school.**

I would argue that a sound knowledge of these factors, as pertaining to both parents and teachers, is vital in facilitating a positive working relationship and is also relevant to the aims of this study. Again, it points to a need to understand the beliefs, attitudes, role constructions and sense of efficacy of teachers *and* parents in order to promote and facilitate that relationship.

2.3.2 Parental involvement: is it always a good thing?

Although the case for the positive influence of parental involvement in children's education appears overwhelming: a 'universal truism' (Cassanova 1996, p. 30), the potential for a clash between the interests of parents and teachers exists. Accordingly, a limited number of studies have sought to highlight a more critical perspective. Pomerantz, Moorman and Litwack (2007) for example, have questioned the extent and nature of parents' involvement, concluding that '*more is not always better*' (p. 373).

Although neither Cassanova nor Pomerantz et al argue against parental involvement per se, both question its universal acceptance in all forms. Cassanova, in her 'call for prudence', criticises the lack of any conception of negative consequences stemming from an increased role for parents, highlighting two factors pertaining to parental voice which she considers to be important.

Firstly, she considers the position of teachers, whose professional competence may be questioned and potentially undermined by a small group of parents who can 'seize power' and dictate not only to teachers but to other, less vocal parents within the school.

Secondly, in terms of outcomes for children, Cassanova warns of moves which result in the extension of the power of 'controlling' parents beyond the home and into the day to day running of their own and other children's lives within school. Although controlling parents are described as not representative of most, Cassanova concludes that

'...they are a major source of conflict in most schools and cannot be overlooked when we speak of parental involvement' (1996, p. 31)

Crozier (1998), however, in her article entitled *'Parents and schools: partnership or surveillance?'* unambiguously argues for a greater voice for parents, concluding that in the partnership between parents and schools, power is most definitely held by the professionals. Here, she views the emerging relationship as double-edged, one in which though parents may call teachers to account, 'partnership' may act as a form of control upon parents, such that

'The development of partnership is carried out through a process of teacher domination and on the basis of the teachers' agendas. For those parents who share that agenda this may be acceptable; for others they are either left without a voice or tensions are created in the working relationship. (1998, p.126)

As stated, the studies described above highlight the potential for tensions created by an increased role for parents within school. I feel that their conclusions are compatible with the thrust and aims of my research, i.e. that more information is needed regarding the nature and quality of parental engagement, a key aspect of which concerns the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes that underlie the interactions between parents and teachers and the subsequent nature of their working relationship. Whilst agreeing with a stronger voice for parents, I believe it would be counter-productive for schools to overlook this aspect of the changing relationship, both in terms of outcomes for children and also in relation to the negative effects this may have on its teachers. The extent to which these concerns may currently be

prevalent, and expressed by teachers in this study, may be an interesting outcome of this research and one which schools could be aware of *and* seek to address.

Having considered the positive impact of parental involvement in their children's education and all-round development, especially in regard of their secondary education, it is necessary to evaluate the research behind parents' fundamental decisions to become involved, without which all considerations of the nature and impact of parental involvement become moot.

2.3.3 Why may parents choose to become involved?

In line with the idea that parental engagement promotes better outcomes for children and schools, the factors behind parents' decisions to become involved have been researched widely over a number of years (e.g. Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey et al, 1987, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, 1997; Pomerantz et al, 2007; Sheldon, 2002).

Whether or not a successful parent-teacher working relationship can be established is dependent, in part, upon parents choosing to become engaged in their child's education and therefore with the school. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), argue that any attempt to explain parents' fundamental decisions about involvement must focus on the person at the individual level. They developed a model of the parental involvement process with five hierarchical levels. This places child and student

outcomes at the apex and parents' basic involvement decisions at the base. Rather in line with the premise of Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' (Maslow, 1943), which sees basic physiological needs such as breathing, food and water as fundamental, I would argue that a parents' initial decision to become involved provides the foundation for all that follows.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) and Hoover Dempsey et al (2005) argue that this basic involvement decision is predominantly influenced by three factors, all of which will be considered in this research:

- The parents' construction of their parental role
- The parents' sense of efficacy in helping with their child's education
- Invitations and demands for involvement from the school and child

An individual parent's decision to become involved, however, constitutes only one step (however vital) on the road towards the ultimate goal of a successful parent-teacher working relationship which should, in turn, improve outcomes for children. The three factors identified above, amongst others, will also affect the *nature* of their interactions with the school and its primary representative, the teacher. This research seeks not only to elicit the parents' perspective on the desirability and nature of the parent-school/parent-teacher working relationship, but also that of the individual teacher. Just as the focus on parents is at the individual level, so will the concerns, thoughts, beliefs and experiences of the individual teacher be equally considered.

Having cited Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler in their assertion that role construction is central to the process of involvement decisions, I next consider the psychological theories of role construction and consider how it may influence the extent and nature of the interactions between parents and teachers.

2.4 The psychology of role construction

Theories of role construction see the ways in which people perceive themselves and others as necessarily socially constructed, an example of which may be the way that parents and teachers may construct their own roles, and perceive the role of the other. These constructs may also influence the ways in which they may interpret social situations or make predictions, based on previous experience.

Goffman (1971), describes the social construction of a situation as one

'which involves not so much a real agreement about what exists, but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honoured' (Goffman, 1971 cited by Tatsis and Koleza, 2006 p.445).

Thus, each person's construction of an event or social situation is subjective, and will differ depending on their individual perspective. Kelly (1955), described each person as a 'scientist', developing constructs, or personally held 'truths' which help them to categorise people and situations which they encounter, understand their world and anticipate and predict the future actions of others:

Man (sic) looks at his world through transparent templates which he creates and then attempts to fit over the realities of which the world is composed'. (Kelly, 1955 p.8-9)

Crozier, (1998) considered the nature of socially constructed relationships within the school environment, pointing out that, in the interplay between parents and teachers, there is a need for the parent to learn the rules of that relationship, such that

'The parent in relation to the teacher has to learn how to behave as a parent... Whilst to some extent the nature of the parent-teacher working relationship may be negotiable, it is in the main underpinned by incontrovertible rules established by the professional' (p.132)

Adding:

'One of these rules is that a fundamental part of being a good parent is to have an overtly positive attitude towards the school' (p.132)

This view of parents as less than equal in the parent-teacher relationship is central to the concerns of this study. If this represents the current beliefs and attitudes of parents it may undermine their sense of efficacy, and if it represents the current beliefs and attitudes held by teachers, then it may serve to reduce the 'invitations and demands' from schools for engagement.

Cunningham and Davis (1985), building on the work of Kelly, similarly describe implicit and explicit frameworks of understanding which guide our behaviour and which we use as reference points and guides to make sense of ourselves and our world. Whilst they may freely or subconsciously act according to conventions ordered by socially defined positions (Solomon et

al, 1985), it is my contention that individual parents and teachers are also capable of constructing their own positions, defined by their own thoughts, beliefs and experience. Cunningham and Davis conclude that professionals working with parents need not only to be aware of their own conceptual frameworks, but also those of each individual parent *and* the way that these frameworks may interact as their working relationships evolve. They further argue that the success of any subsequent working relationship is largely dependent upon the nature of the frameworks which individual parents and teachers employ.

Having described the ways in which individuals may construct their own roles, I next consider how these constructions may impact upon the focus of this study, the parent-teacher working relationship.

2.4.1 Natural enemies? Parent-teacher role construction

'More than half a century ago, Willard Waller (1932) observed that parents and teachers are 'natural enemies'. The basis of his argument was that parents and teachers maintain qualitatively different relationships with the same child, especially in regard to affective bonds and spheres of responsibility and as a consequence want different things for the child'. (Powell, 1989, cited by Keyes, 2002 p.181)

Research has indicated for many years that parents' and teachers' ideas about their roles in children's education are important to understanding the degree and nature of their involvement (e.g. Crozier, 1999; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005; Katz, 1984).

Parental role construction has been defined by Hoover-Dempsey et al as

Parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education and the patterns of parental behaviour that follow those beliefs.' (2005, p.107)

In addition, Hoover-Dempsey et al identified the factors which may determine parents' role constructs in terms of involvement, finding that

Role construction for involvement is influenced by parents' beliefs about how children develop, what parents should do to rear their children effectively, and what parents should do at home to help children succeed in school. Role construction is also shaped by the expectations of individuals and groups important to the parent about the parent's responsibilities relevant to the child's schooling. (2005, p.107)

Katz, (1984) looked not only at the roles assumed by parents, but also those of teachers. In particular, Katz sought to identify the distinctions between the orientations of mothers and teachers towards children, and the effects these may have on their growth and development. (For the purposes of my evaluation of Katz's work, I shall consider each reference to the role of 'mother' to encompass that of 'parent'). Katz developed a framework which identified and defined a number of role dimensions on which parents and teachers are seen to be diametrically opposed.

These are shown in the table (figure 2.1) below:

Role dimension	Mothering (Parenting)	Teaching
Scope of function	Diffuse and limitless	Specific and limited
Intensity of affect	High	Low
Attachment	Optimum attachment	Optimum detachment
Rationality	Optimum irrationality	Optimum rationality
Spontaneity	Optimum spontaneity	Optimum intentionality
Partiality	Partial	Impartial
Scope of responsibility	Individual	Whole group

Figure 2.1 Distinctions between parenting and teaching in their central tendencies on seven role dimensions (Katz, 1984 p.15)

Although Katz first described these issues in the 1980's (above), I would argue that her findings have become increasingly relevant and applicable today in the light of the increased role for parents in their child's education and the widening of the teacher's role in addition to the traditional 'teaching' function.

In relation to the first dimension, 'scope of function', it is argued that the role of the parent is 'diffuse and limitless'. Katz further asserts that this aspect of the role is taken for granted, as there is

'Nothing about the young child's life that is not the parent's business. Thus, it is unnecessary to prove that any aspect of the child's life is within the purview of the family' (p.16)

In contrast, the role of the teacher in this working relationship is seen as specific in scope, function and content. Further, it is limited to a technically defined sphere, outside of which, responsibility 'is not conceded to the school'. Katz also makes the point that the distinctions alluded to in the table above become 'greater and sharper with increasing age of the pupil', thus potentially widening the gap between parent and teacher in terms of role construction, and exerting even greater influence on their ability to form an effective working relationship.

'A good parent-child working relationship is in fact, very unlike a good teacher-child working relationship: yet because the roles have certain ingredients in common, though different proportions, (nurturance, discipline, information giving for example), they are sometimes confused by the participants themselves, to the misunderstanding of all concerned' (Newson and Newson 1976, cited by Katz 1984, p. 17)

Whilst emphasising these differences, Katz also acknowledged the existence of common perspectives as follows;

It is obvious that teachers do many of the same things with children that mothers do, and vice-versa. It is in the nature of young children that from time to time they

require of their teachers at school some of the same tending, caring and guiding given them by their mothers at home. Similarly, mothers are helping their children to acquire knowledge and skills that teachers consider important. (Katz, 1984 p.15)

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, it is the aim of this study to highlight areas of difference and commonality, should they emerge, between the views of parents and teachers in order that they may be addressed in the interests of improving their working relationship and subsequent outcomes for children.

Areas of potential difference were addressed by Keyes, (2002), asserting that

'Confusion results when teacher and parent roles become ambiguous' (p.182)

Keyes argues that this confusion presents two challenges; the first is to understand and make public the factors behind these role ambiguities, and the second to use this knowledge 'to create effective parent-teacher partnerships'. Accordingly, Keyes considered the factors relating to role construction which may influence the parent-teacher working relationship. She identified three parental and teacher constructs pertaining towards roles within school; parent focused, school focused and partnership focused. In the parent focused construct, the parent assumes primary responsibility for their child's 'educational outcome', whilst in the school focused construct, the school is seen as primarily responsible. In the third, partnership focused construct, parents share responsibility with the school and each sees their role as one of collaboration.

Crucially, Keyes argues that how individual parents and teachers interact will vary, based on the fit between the particular beliefs which they hold in this regard. Interestingly, Keyes also asserts that the partnership focused construct is a 'relatively recent' one and, in line with parental involvement more generally, one which becomes less prevalent the older the child gets.

Deslandes and Rousseau (2007) also examined the degree of congruence between teachers' and parents' role constructs, this time in respect of assuming responsibility for homework. In this respect, they found similar attitudes amongst teachers but differing expectations between teachers and parents, for example

- There is no difference among teachers regarding the understanding of their role in homework, regardless of attitude and work experience
- At both the primary and secondary levels, teachers have higher expectations of the parents' role in homework than parents do

Based on these findings, Deslandes and Rousseau also made two assertions regarding the implications of differing role constructs.

- More work needs to be done related to the activities parents think that they are responsible for with respect to homework
- Relative incongruence between parents' role construction and teachers' expectations about their role should not be overlooked if we are to promote more positive family-school working relationships

It can be seen then, that parents and teachers may have differing views of their own and each others' roles, and that this level of incongruence may have an impact upon the degree of understanding and 'common ground' between the two groups. Next, I consider the concept of 'loco parentis', a notion which may in many ways underpin the view teachers have of themselves and also represent a potential source of role confusion between teachers and parents.

2.4.2 'Loco Parentis'

Thus far, I have argued that there may be a level of confusion surrounding the respective roles of parent and teacher, both within and between the two groups and over a range of issues. This extends to one of the most enduring aspects of the role of teacher, that of 'loco-parentis'.

Under the Children's Act (DCSF, 1989) teachers have a duty of care towards their pupils, traditionally referred to as 'in loco parentis' or 'in the place of the parent'. Legally, while not bound by parental responsibility, teachers must behave as any reasonable parent would do in promoting the welfare and safety of children in their care. This idea dates back to the 19th century, when courts were first considering the parameters of teachers' responsibilities. During this period, case law established that a teacher should act as 'a prudent father'.

In her article entitled 'In Loco Parentis?' Hunt (2002) considers this notion both from the teachers' perspective and that of wider society. She concludes that:

Teachers are very often unsure where the line should be drawn between the role of teacher and that of social worker. Indeed, teachers have increasingly become not merely educators, but also mentors in their pupils' all-round personal development... Certainly, the role of the teacher has led to a great confusion in the profession and in society more generally (2002, p33)

The degree of role confusion described above *between* parents and teachers is also apparent *within* the two groups. In the following sections, I consider the extent, nature and perception of the differences in attitudes and beliefs within and between parents and teachers, and how these may impact upon the interactions between them.

2.5. Attitudes and beliefs of parents and teachers

The publicly stated view of the teaching profession towards a partnership between teachers and parents is outlined in The Code of Conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers (GTCE, 2009 p.2), a document which gives teachers a wide-ranging brief, using their 'professional expertise and judgement to do the best for the children and young people in their care' (p.8). The code goes on to describe eight principles of conduct and practice, one of which states that registered teachers should

'Strive to establish productive partnerships with parents and carers... considering parents' and carers' views and perspectives, including those which relate to their children's development' (p.12)

Epstein (1986), however, asserts that in reality, individual teachers 'have strong opinions about parental involvement'. She describes two fundamentally different perspectives which teachers may hold, underpinned

by their philosophies and beliefs, regarding the efficacy of a collaborative working relationship with parents. The first, emphasizes the

"Inherent incompatibility, competition, and conflict between families and schools and supports the separation of the two institutions" (p.277)

The second is characterised by

'The coordination, cooperation and complementarity of schools and families' (which) encourages communication and collaboration between the two institutions' (p.277)

Whilst teachers are collectively duty bound to adhere to the values espoused by their professional bodies, they are, above all, individuals whose actions may be influenced by own thoughts, beliefs and attitudes.

From the study by Crozier (1999) described previously, a notable and interesting finding was that of a perceived 'class divide' between parents and teachers, arguing that 'the working relationship between parent and teacher must be seen as a class relation' (p. 322). These differences in beliefs and attitudes were found not only from the parents, but also in interviews with the teachers from the same school. Crozier describes a recognition amongst the staff that they held a different set of beliefs and values from the majority of parents, resulting in a disparaging view of their abilities and an often off-hand and dismissive attitude towards the majority who came from different backgrounds from themselves.

Teachers in this study also reported a 'hard-core' of committed parents, who constituted approximately ten percent of the school population, with

another thirty percent who were to some extent seen as supportive. The majority of parents however, the remaining sixty percent, were viewed as indifferent, unable to cope with their children themselves, or even as hostile to the school.

In contrast, Peters et al (2007) carried out a study for the Department for Children, Schools and Families into parental involvement in children's education. This was the third in a series of reports (DfES, 2001, 2004) which sought to identify parents' beliefs regarding parental involvement, as well as to compare their findings with those of the previous surveys. Their findings did not correspond with the somewhat negative perceptions of teachers reported by Crozier.

From their telephone survey of over 5000 parents of UK school children aged 5-16, Peters et al found that

- Parents were more likely to see a child's education as mainly or wholly their responsibility (28%, up from 20% in 2001)
- Parents were less likely to see a child's education as mainly or wholly the responsibility of the school (26%, down from 43% in 2001)
- Those who saw responsibility as equally shared between parent and school rose from 38% in 2001 to 45% in 2007

In line with much of the research concerning the roles played by parents and teachers, the attitudes and beliefs described above reveal a wide range of differing views and perceptions which may impact negatively on their predisposition and ability to work together effectively. In the next section, I

consider another important building block in the working relationship, that of a sense of personal efficacy.

2.6 Parents' and teachers' sense of efficacy

As stated previously, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) found that a parent's decision to become involved is predominantly influenced by three factors, construction of their role, invitations and demands from the school and their sense of efficacy in helping with their child's education.

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 2002) defines three modes of human agency; direct personal agency, proxy agency (which relies on others to secure desired outcomes) and collective agency (where knowledge, skills and resources are pooled), adding that

*'Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of **personal efficacy**. Whatever other factors serve as guides or motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce desired effects by one's actions'* (2002, p.270)

Keyes (2002), in considering the nature of the working relationship between parents and teachers, also addresses the issue of teachers' and parents' efficacy beliefs, particularly in the context of understanding the nature and quality of the interactions they are likely to have. She contends that high efficacy levels in both groups will tend to result in successful parent-teacher working relationships. Factors affecting efficacy levels include experience of previous positive interactions between the two groups and observed or reported successes involving others.

Other contributing influences to parents' perceived efficacy are a parent's belief that they are capable of exacting a positive influence on their child's school outcomes, specific suggestions of involvement from teachers and teachers who believe that parents are capable of contributing to their children's educational success (Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Hoover-Dempsey, 1997). Hoover-Dempsey et al, (2002) also found that teachers who invite parents' involvement tend to report high levels of support from parents, and tend to be perceived by parents as better teachers.

Conversely, negative experiences can produce 'leftover anxieties' (Taylor, 1968 cited by Keyes, 2002 p.183) which may lead to reduced levels of efficacy and subsequently diminished working relationships.

Other factors identified by Keyes (2002) relating to parents' perceptions of efficacy around the parent-teacher working relationship include:

- Lack of parental choice in choice of school
- Lack of influence within school
- Feeling threatened by the authority of school
- The notion that the running of schools should 'be left up to the experts'
- Concerns around family privacy
- Previous experience of school leading to feelings of inadequacy

Similarly, factors relating to perceptions of teachers' efficacy include:

- Feeling unappreciated by parents
- A perceived lack of parental interest in their child's education
- A perceived unwillingness from parents to actively participate in meetings and voluntary activities etc
- A perception of parents as challenging and even adversarial

It is these perceptions, accurate or otherwise, which are a focus of this study. Contradictory insights gained and *communicated* to both parties may help to change these perceptions for the better, whilst those which may confirm these negative perceptions need to be known and understood in order for them to be addressed in the pursuit of improved outcomes for children.

Having considered the factors which may influence the extent and nature of parental involvement and subsequent parent-teacher relationships, in the following section I discuss the literature which considers the nature and importance of this relationship to child outcomes.

2.7 The nature and importance of the parent-teacher relationship

As stated in the introduction, Keyes, (2002, p.177), whilst concluding that the value of the home-school partnership is 'universally accepted', identifies the parent-teacher working relationship as key and describes it as '***the nucleus of the partnership***'. Keyes goes on to describe a number of

factors which may determine the success of any working relationship between parents and teachers, namely:

- The degree of match between a teacher's and a parent's culture and values
- How teachers and parents view their roles
- The societal forces at work on family and school
- The 'fit' between parental cares and concerns and those of the teacher

(Adapted from Keyes, 2002 p.179-181)

An important aspect of this research, and one which makes it immediately relevant to the aims of this study, is that it considers the concerns of both teachers and parents. Keyes, however, goes on to state that the focus of her research is on the *teachers'* responsibilities in the parent-teacher partnership, citing Patrikakou and Weissberg (1999) in their assertion that

'Although it needs to be a two-way dynamic to work, 'teachers are really the glue that holds the home/school partnership together' (Keyes, 2002 p.179)

Patrikakou and Weissberg (1999) themselves also make a number of important assertions regarding the importance and nature of the parent-teacher relationship, again placing the onus for its efficacy on teachers;

- The quality of parent-teacher working relationships, rather than the quantity of contacts, affects student achievement and behaviour

- Teacher outreach to parents and parent perceptions of how welcome their involvement is are far more important than demographic factors such as race or socio-economic status in determining parent involvement
- Improving the constructiveness of parent-teacher working relationships and increasing the ways in which teachers can influence parents' perceptions and practices are the keys to establishing effective partnerships between schools and families

Whilst acknowledging the obvious role of teachers in this relationship, I would argue that in order to mirror the move towards greater *involvement* for parents, consideration should also be given to the ways in which parents can influence teachers' perceptions and practices. This *reciprocal* exchange of ideas and influence is surely the key to 'establishing effective partnerships between schools and families' described above.

Having established the imperative for an effective working relationship between parents and teachers, who then, may be best placed to encourage, promote and facilitate this relationship? Love (2009), describing Educational Psychologists' early search for an identity, envisages a role which includes supporting teachers and parents, citing Knapman (1976) who asserted over 30 years ago that

"More emphasis should be placed on the consultative role of psychologists in schools and on the routine involvement of parents" (p.21)

2.7.1 The Role of Educational Psychologists in the parent-teacher relationship

Bastiani (1993) asserts that

"In the real world, there are important differences of attitude and expectations not only between parents and schools, but also amongst them",

and concludes that

"It is necessary to have a clearer understanding of some of the opportunities and problems involved to be able to work towards more effective practice" (Bastiani, p.113).

Given the emerging role of EPs as community psychologists working holistically across home, school and community (MacKay, 2006), the ability to work effectively with parents and schools should be central to the role of an Educational Psychologist.

What then, are the factors, for example psychological, historical, cultural, ideological, and philosophical, which may shape parents' and teachers' *perceptions* of schooling and therefore what they may expect of themselves and each other? How may these *perceptions* influence the degree to which the two groups can work together successfully? Knowledge gained by Educational Psychologists in this area could, and I would argue strongly ***should***, be employed both on an individual level and more systemically in order to facilitate better outcomes for children.

In terms of a systemic role, Webb (1996) points to a lack of emphasis on teachers to work with parents and states that:

"Opportunities for teachers to prepare to work with parents and families during training, and to consolidate and develop the capacity to do this work more effectively 'on the job' are, at best, minimal and unsystematic, and, at worst, non-existent" (p. 151)

Webb adds that, while initial and post experience training and development opportunities are sorely needed:

"There is little consensus about what should be done, by whom, and when" (p. 151)

Patrikakou and Weissberg, (1999) also found that teachers cited two predominant barriers to their implementation of parent involvement activities; lack of training and lack of time. In respect of training, they reported only a small percentage of teachers who had received any pre-service training in parental involvement and few colleges of education that offered such courses.

In the study alluded to previously, Pelco and Ries (1999) suggested that school psychologists have a *key role* to play in the in-service training of teachers regarding parental involvement. These opportunities include

- Helping teachers develop effective communication skills for use with parents
- Assisting with techniques for organizing effective parent-teacher conferences
- Encouraging teachers to make home visits to families who would appreciate this

In addition, Pelco and Ries also suggest a number of ways in which Educational Psychologists could work directly with parents in order to facilitate an effective relationship between themselves and their child's school, namely

- Working with parents of children of all ages to ensure they are skilled in suggesting and supporting effective home-based parental involvement and for collaborating effectively with schools
- Helping parents to develop strategies for conveying higher educational aspirations to their children
- Encouraging the involvement of extended family members in home-based and school-based parental involvement

Pelco and Reis conclude that, given these abilities and opportunities, Educational Psychologists should play a significant role in promoting and facilitating family-school partnerships.

2.8 Parent-teacher collaboration: a summary

This research is underpinned by the widely accepted notion that enhanced parental involvement promotes better outcomes for children, according to a range of educational and socio-economic indicators of wellbeing. Much previous research concerned the notion of 'parental involvement' or 'parental engagement' in the education and all round development of children, and was originally characterised by a one-way transfer of information, demands, invitations and responsibilities from school to home.

In doing so, this research also takes for granted the positive role and views of the teacher, concentrating instead on the variability of parenting and the multiplicity of factors which may affect the motivation and ability of parents to become involved, as well as the degree and nature of that involvement. A limited number of more recent studies, e.g. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) have identified that the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes which parents hold may underlie their decisions towards becoming involved in their child's education and all-round development more generally.

Less prevalent, however, is similar evidence of views regarding parental involvement pertaining to the other half of the parent-teacher dyad; the teacher. In light of the relative paucity of data concerning the motivations, beliefs and attitudes of teachers regarding the nature of their own role and that of the parents of children within their school, I aim to explore these issues and the degree of congruence and dissonance *within and between* the two groups: parents and teachers.

I also seek to explore the beliefs which may influence the manner in which parents and teachers interact, and the resultant nature and efficacy of these interactions. In addition, I consider the extent to which teachers and parents may have assumed, absorbed, shaped, or negotiated socially constructed roles and the bearing this may have on their relationships and subsequent outcomes for children and young people.

Accordingly, my research will explore the following issues...

- Parents' perceptions of their own role and responsibilities in the education and all round development of their children
- Parents' perceptions of the role and responsibilities of school/teachers in the above
- Teachers' perceptions of both their own, and (more generally) school's role and responsibilities in the education and all round development of children
- Teachers' perceptions of the role and responsibilities of parents in the above

...in order to consider how what is learned from the above may be used to improve professional practice and to address the substantive research questions;

- 1. What perceptions do parents have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 2. What perceptions do parents have of the teachers' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 3. What perceptions do teachers have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 4. What perceptions do teachers have of the parents' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*

And the further, subsidiary questions:

1. *Are there areas of commonality and divergence in perceptions which emerge from the findings?*
2. *If so, how can an understanding of these issues be addressed to enhance the working relationship between parents and teachers and improve outcomes for children and families?*

Having established the case for gaining further understanding and insight into the nature of the parent-teacher working relationship, in the following chapter I will present and discuss the methodology and methods employed in this study.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction and outline

As described in the previous chapter, my research is concerned with gaining a better understanding of the important working relationship between parents and teachers, and focuses on the staff and parents of one large Academy school in my Local Authority. I have chosen to conduct my research within a Secondary Education setting, as opportunities for parent-school interaction have been shown to decline from Year 7 onwards ((Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005; Spera, 2005), thus increasing the potential for misunderstandings, misconceptions and ideological differences between parents and teachers to go unchallenged or unaddressed.

In brief, my research can be summarised thus:

What? An exploration and analysis of the roles that parents and teachers ascribe to themselves and each other regarding the education and all-round development of children

Why? To highlight possible areas of divergence and commonality that can be addressed in order to better understand and further enhance the working relationship between parents and teachers and improve outcomes for children.

The research described above is to be carried out in order to address the following substantive research questions;

1. *What perceptions do parents have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
2. *What perceptions do parents have of the teachers' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
3. *What perceptions do teachers have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
4. *What perceptions do teachers have of the parents' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*

This chapter, therefore, has four main aims: to explain and offer a rationale for the methodological orientation and epistemological stance adopted in carrying out this study, to explain and outline the chosen methodology, to provide a detailed outline of the research design and to consider and address the ethical issues involved in conducting this research.

3.2 The Research Paradigm, Epistemology and Ontology

In this section, I aim to explain the rationale for my chosen methodology.

Willig (2001, p. 2) describes her journey, as a researcher, from seeing research in terms of 'methods-as-recipes' to an understanding of 'research process-as-adventure'. Accordingly, in terms of my own thesis, I have come to see the process as an adventure, one which began with a simple question. As described in the previous chapters, the notion that parents

and teachers work closely and effectively together for the good of children is one which has been promoted and legislated for consistently over a number of decades. My simple question was; what do parents and teachers feel and understand about this?

My 'adventure', from initial question to submitted thesis, has caused me to consider a wide range of issues, ranging from the nature of knowledge itself to the minutiae of the order of presentation of prompts in a focus group and even the type of biscuit most amenable to my co-participants, the parents and teachers.

Consideration of the nature of knowledge itself, a question to which there is no definitive 'answer', required me to reflect on my own personal view of the world. Ontological perspectives can be divided broadly into two views of the world, the first of which sees a reality comprised of objective, universal truths, which are 'out there', waiting to be discovered, measured and explained. This objective ontological position lends itself to a *positivist epistemology*, one which focuses on generalisability and causal explanation. Its methodologies seek to address research questions by testing hypotheses in order to explain and predict these 'universal truths'.

My search for knowledge, however, is more about gaining an *understanding* of others' views of the world in order to have an insight into the meanings they attach to people and events. This, for me, is a world full of meanings, constructed and interpreted by people each with their own views, shaped

by their own experiences and perceptions of others around them. As Crotty (1998) describes it

'It becomes a world of meaning only when meaning-making beings make sense of it (p.10)

As such, my own ontological position, and the one which underlies the whole rationale for the topic, methodology and methods adopted in this research, is one of the socially constructed nature of reality, with as many 'realities' as there are people in the world. This constructionist ontological position lends itself to an *interpretative epistemology*, one which instead focuses on relativism and understanding. Its methodologies seek to address research questions through hermeneutic enquiry in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues at hand.

Having established my own view of 'knowledge' and the nature of what I hope to gain from it, my adventure then turns to the methodology most suited to addressing my research questions. Choice of the most pertinent and appropriate methodology, however, is not only guided by the factors described above. The potential options at this stage included all those which seek to gain a 'rich and thick' (Geertz, 1973) understanding of a person's lived experience, such as grounded theory, narrative enquiry and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Before adopting IPA as my chosen methodology, I considered each of these potential options in turn. Grounded theory, as the name suggests, whilst meeting many of the criteria dictated by my epistemological position, seeks to analyse qualitative data to its saturation point (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)

in order to construct theory. Given my search for understanding involving the double hermeneutic, i.e. including my interpretation of the participants' interpretation of their world, I sought a more interpretative methodology which affords and gives greater acknowledgement to the subjectivity of the researcher.

My initial inclination had been to opt for Narrative Inquiry (e.g. Chase, 2005), which, like IPA, acknowledges multiple truths and constructed realities, seeks to draw themes and tentative conclusions from a careful analysis of people's described experience and may 'unearth hidden or subordinated ideas' (Fraser, 2004, p.183). Narrative Inquiry is, however, most commonly characterised by a series of in-depth interviews with participants, building up a rich picture of their life stories. Whilst being of undeniable interest, these life stories may not have pertained sufficiently to the direct focus of this study, namely the working relationship between parents and teachers.

As stated, my chosen methodology, IPA stems from the theoretical position of interpretivist, phenomenological epistemology and is concerned with how individuals make sense of the world around them (Willig, 2001). As such, IPA acknowledges the impossibility of direct, unfettered access to others' experience (Willig, 2001), emphasises the dynamic process of research, acknowledges the significant and active role of the researcher (Smith and Osborn, 2003), and emphasises the reflective process of interpretation (Reid et al, 2005; Willig, 2001). As such, I consider that it is ideally suited to addressing the research questions detailed above. Below, I detail the

fundamental components of IPA, at each stage linking their relevance directly to the salient aspects of my thesis

3.2.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The '*Interpretative*' element of IPA refers to the role of the researcher alluded to above. In IPA, there is an explicit acknowledgement of the researcher as co-collaborator in both process and product. Smith and Osborn (2003) describe this as a dynamic process in which the researcher has an active role. Through this, the researcher tries to get as close as possible to the participant's personal world of lived experience, or to take an 'insider's perspective', as if seeing the world through their eyes (Conrad, 1987). As stated previously, Smith and Osborn (2003) describe a two stage process of interpretation or 'double hermeneutic' in which

"The participants are trying to make sense of their world: the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (2003, p.53).

They also assert that IPA combines an empathic hermeneutics with a questioning, or 'critical' hermeneutics (Lyons and Coyle, 2007 p.36), trying to understand lived experience from the point of view of the participant whilst at the same time asking critical questions of the text concerning its function and 'reading between the lines' to ascertain whether something may be 'leaking out which was not intended'.

'Phenomenology' is a philosophical approach to the study of experience, concerned with the ways in which humans gain knowledge of the world around them. It is based on the premise that objects and events are

manifest only as they are perceived or understood in individual human consciousness, rather than as independent, objective 'realities' (Smith et al 2009). Husserl (cited by Smith et al 2009) first described a *Transcendental Phenomenology*, in which the researcher should direct his or her attention 'back to the things themselves', setting aside or 'bracketing' that which we know or think we already know about them. Crotty (1998) asserts that,

If we lay aside, as best we can the prevailing understandings, possibilities for new meaning emerge' (p.78).

The approach adopted in this study privileges the 'expert' accounts through which participants make sense of their experience of objects or events (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005) and produces knowledge free from 'common-sense notions' inherent within most other forms of understanding (Willig, 2001). As such, it fulfils the requirement of this research to avoid 'implicit' assumptions about teachers' and parents' views. In phenomenological research, it is not the phenomenon itself, but the research participant's account of it with which the researcher engages. An example of this emerged from the data when *each* of the parents recalled an abstract memory from their youth of the local bobby administering summary justice to them with a 'clip around the ear' in the interests of discipline. It occurred to me that these, perhaps, were not verbatim accounts of actual events, rather a nod to nostalgia and a yearned for past.

Analysis, is a generic term used to describe the purposeful interrogation of data in order to produce findings; be they objective (e.g. numbers, statistics

etc) or more subjective insights into the phenomena researched. It constitutes the vital step described by Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.1) as the “process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge.” The methods used to analyse data are fundamentally dependent upon the nature of the study, the type of information sought and the epistemological position adopted by the researcher, all of which point to IPA as the most suitable methodology for this study as I further explain below.

3.3 Research Design

Having chosen an appropriate methodology, the next step was to select the methods best suited to this methodology.

3.3.1 Methods of data collection

Briefly, the research design entailed focus groups conducted independently with parents and teachers, the initial findings of which informed the main focus of the semi-structured interviews with the participants (see figure 3.1 below).

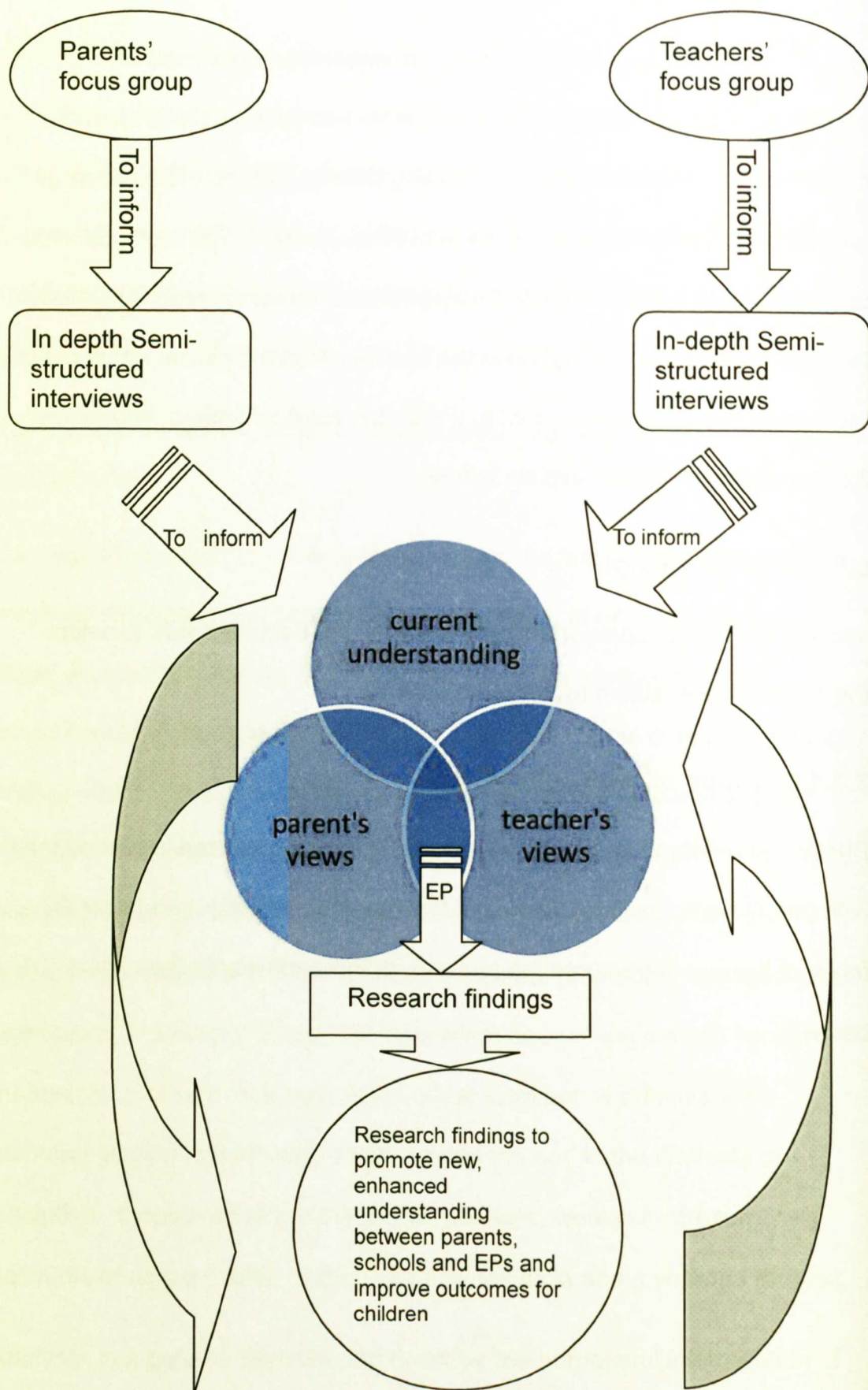


Figure 3.1 Research methodology design

Opportunities for respondent validation or 'member checking' were also offered between initial coding and the presentation of completed themes, consideration of which contributed to the validity of my findings (an issue which I will consider in detail in a following section) and ensured that they resonate as closely as possible with the original data as expressed by the participants.

3.3.2 The participants

IPA is characterised by in-depth interviews with each participant. The scope of this study is necessarily constrained by the fact that I am operating in '*lone-scholar, no-budget mode*', as described by Dunleavy (2003, p.20) though, as stated previously, in an attempt to elicit data indirectly, through the recounting of childhood memories of school for example, I have generated a large amount of narrative data. Fraser (2004, p.186), asserts that even studies with relatively few participants are likely to produce 'many more stories than can possibly be analysed in any one article, report or thesis'. As such, Smith et al (2009) recommend a sample size for IPA studies of up to six participants, with three being seen as optimal for a novice researcher. This allows a sufficiently in-depth engagement with the data from each individual case whilst also facilitating a detailed consideration of 'similarity and difference, convergence and divergence' (Smith and Osborn, 2003 p.57).

3.3.3 Selection of participants

Participants are experts on their own experiences and can offer researchers an understanding of their thoughts, commitments and feelings through telling their own stories...participants are recruited because of their expertise in the phenomenon being explored...(Reid, Flowers and Larkin 2005)

I feel that IPA is particularly well suited to the purposes of this research as it explicitly sets out to privilege the accounts of the participants, putting any preconceived or 'common-sense' assumptions about teachers' and parents' thoughts, beliefs and motivations to one side. Smith and Osborn (2003) describe how IPA researchers try to recruit largely 'homogenous' groups of participants through 'purposeful sampling' for whom the research question will be particularly significant. For this reason, I chose to recruit teachers and parents from a *single* Secondary setting, thus making the groups as 'homogenous' as is possible within the context of this study.

Through the engagement of these 'experiential experts', the research process is more likely to throw up novel insights and introduce the possibility of uncovering issues that the researcher had not thought of.

Having decided the nature and scope of my research, my thoughts turned to the most suitable choice of Secondary school in which to conduct it. I was aware of the school through previous experience of working within my Local Authority, and chose it as a typically achieving Secondary setting with approximately 1150 students on roll between the ages of eleven and

eighteen. Between my initial contact and the substantive data collecting phases, the school converted to Academy status, resulting in some changes in personnel and management structure. This posed me several challenges in terms of primary points of contact and also in the availability and time constraints on staff seeking to become accustomed to the new ways of working, although I was able to maintain my links with participants through the use of email, telephone and face to face visits.

3.3.4 The teachers

My initial contact with the teachers came through an approach to the Deputy Head, who suggested that I address all the teachers at the conclusion of a pre-arranged meeting in the staff room in order to explain my research. This proved successful, and eight teachers initially took information sheets and consent forms to complete at their discretion, seven of which were returned to the front office for my collection (see appendices 1 and 3). As I am aware of a possible self-selecting bias in those opting to take part, I made further efforts to speak directly to a number of those who had initially not shown an interest. Two of these teachers (both male) indicated that they would participate if I really needed them, although they were honest enough to say that they would prefer not to if possible. I made a decision that those who had freely volunteered were more likely to cooperate fully and openly from the start and were also more likely to remain engaged over the extended period of my research. From the original seven, six (including two males and participants across the age

range) were selected for invitation to the focus groups, four of whom actually opted to take part.

3.3.5 The parents

My attempts to engage parents in my research, however, proved to be far more problematic and truly an 'adventure' in its own right. I first met with the Head of Year 9, having decided to approach the parents of a single year group who were established within the school, but were yet to directly engage with the demands of their GCSE qualifications. After discussions on the best way to proceed, I was given the opportunity to address the whole of year 9 (approximately 270 students) at a pre-arranged assembly. This had three specific purposes; firstly to explain my research in order to help them do the same to their parents, and secondly to distribute the parents' information sheet and consent forms for them to take home in their school bags. Thirdly, I presented a short video clip (see attached file) which I had arranged to be available to students and parents on the school's website. This explained the purpose and nature of my research for those parents seeking clarification or further information and, for those able to access the internet, was available to them in their own homes.

Despite regular contact however, after six weeks and the considerable efforts of the Head of Year 9 to elicit some response through reminders and prompts to class tutors, no parents had returned their completed consent forms.

Following a meeting with my dissertation supervisor, it was decided that an approach to the parents of Year 7 students may yield a better response, given that they may have more recent experience of involvement with their child's school (as described in the preceding chapter). My new approach to the school (by this stage an Academy) resulted in a meeting with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who very kindly offered to arrange two opportunities for parents of Year 7 students to visit the school in order to discuss any issues they may have with herself and other year 7 staff. They were also advised in the invitation (which was sent both in paper form and electronically) that I would be on hand to talk to them regarding my research should they be interested. Thankfully, these two opportunities for direct face-to-face contact, though not hugely well attended, resulted in four parents agreeing to take part in the research. Each was presented with a parents' information sheet and a consent form which were duly signed (see appendices 2 and 3)

As such, in seeking to explore the views of two potentially distinct groups (teachers and parents), I conducted two focus groups, the first with three participants and the second with four. I then interviewed three participants from each group, all recruited from the same Academy School.

Having established my research participants, my thoughts turned directly to the process of data collection and the most effective ways to proceed.

Next, I explain in detail the rationale for my choice of methods of data collection.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Rationale behind the use of focus groups

Focus groups can exist in many forms and for different purposes. One such purpose described by Kvale is 'to assist in the setting of the interview stage' (1996, p.127), upon which the participants are encouraged to articulate their view of their lives and worlds. Just as semi-structured interviews emerged in response to the perceived artificiality and power imbalances associated with formal structured interviews, focus groups were developed to better replicate the process of constructing social reality found in everyday life (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

Here, the data generated by each focus group was used to guide the content of the respective semi-structured interviews, rather like a series of signposts for the 'interviewer as traveller' described earlier. Focus groups tend not to be used as the primary source of data due to the difficulty in tracking individual meaning-making in group situations (Smith and Eatough, 2007), although Wilkinson (2008) asserts that they may constitute a valuable source of information in their own right and are open to analysis from a phenomenological perspective.

On a practical level, Morgan (1988) suggests that too small a group can lead to a disproportionate exertion of group dynamics, too large a group can easily fragment and lose focus. Morgan advises using four to twelve people, with around six as a figure which will provide enough data whilst

making the group more manageable, especially where emotive topics may be touched upon.

I am aware that, for my research, along with qualitative research generally, any findings are open to the potential charge of reflecting undue researcher bias. Whilst this is to some extent inevitable (and indeed an acknowledged and integral part of any collaborative generation of data in IPA), I felt it was important to have a transparent process behind the formation and focus of the semi-structured interviews (the use of which I detail in the following section). As such, I employed focus groups which have been described as:

'Ideally suited to developing themes, topic and schedules for subsequent interviews' ... the participants interact with each other rather than the interviewer, such that the views of the participants can emerge – the participant's rather than the researcher's agenda can predominate' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000 p.288).

As well as the potential for the views of the focus group facilitator to unduly influence the nature and scope of the content described above, focus groups have also been criticised for their potential towards conformity, the generation of socially mediated responses, and participants being constrained in their ability to talk freely for fear of being judged by the other members of the group (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). In order to enable the participants to talk freely, I arranged for the focus groups to take place in an unused area of the school where they would be neither seen nor overheard by staff, children or parents. Throughout the course of the focus groups, I remained in the background as far as possible, although I

did monitor and intervene gently to ensure that no one person was able to dominate the discussion and to give each participant an equal chance to express their views. I also reminded the participants that the data obtained would be anonymised, ensuring that they would not be identified through my findings. Bearing in mind their primary purpose in this study, their informal nature and the fact that they were to be followed by in-depth individual interviews, the focus groups proved to be a very valuable tool in my data collection.

3.4.2 Development of the focus groups

As stated previously, and in line with the process advised by Wilkinson (2008), two 'pilot' focus groups with colleagues from my Local Authority Educational Psychology Service were conducted, one with those who are parents but had not previously been teachers (to simulate parents' focus group) and another with those who had (to simulate the teachers' focus group). Feedback from these indicated, for example, that a prompt sheet was needed regarding the explicit details of the Every Child Matters agenda for the teachers' focus group (see appendix 4a). It also led me to drop a number of prompts from recent press coverage which were deemed either insufficient to stimulate lively debate or deemed overly leading in terms of 'funnelling' the conversation in a particular direction.

3.4.3 The focus groups

As stated, the two groups, parents and teachers, were treated as separate entities, therefore each had a separate focus group to promote discussion

around topics specifically pertinent to that group. Analysis of each focus group, using the framework for analysis in IPA described by Smith et al (2009, see appendix 9), was conducted in order that areas of direct relevance may be identified and used to inform the content of the semi structured interviews.

My first stage of data collection was a focus group consisting of three teachers, held after school within a quiet classroom. This number is within the parameters of focus group literature, but outside the 'optimum' range of four to six participants as described by Morgan (1988). In mitigation, the number of participants fell from six at midday to three by the end of the school day for a variety of personal and professional reasons, such as irate parents and a faulty boiler! Nevertheless, the quality and depth of material gained served its primary purpose, i.e. to inform the interview schedule of my teachers' semi-structured interviews (see appendix 6).

Having first provided everyone with tea and biscuits in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere, my initial prompt to each participant, "please tell me about a favourite teacher from your school days", had two important purposes. The first was to encourage them to talk around a 'non-threatening' area, thus putting them at ease and hopefully establishing a level of rapport with myself and each other. Secondly, given the intensely personal nature of IPA, I wanted to promote a discussion which would illuminate how each participant sees the world and their place in it, and explore the extent to which early experiences and memories may have impacted upon their future lives. As I wanted my subsequent interview

questions to centre on feelings, thoughts and beliefs, I sought to adopt this mode of enquiry from the start.

After this, each participant was shown a copy of the Every Child Matters (2004) 'five outcomes for children', and prompted to discuss their understanding of each, and which they considered as most important to them (see appendix 4a). The third series of prompts consisted of quotations derived from research and recent media articles concerning schools, teachers, parents and the role of education (see appendix 4b), which were presented and offered for discussion individually.

The parents' focus group was conducted in similar fashion to that of the teachers' described above, with an initial question (tell me about your proudest moment as a parent) to 'break the ice' and stimulate discussion. It differed in terms of numbers, in this case four, and in the content of the stimuli presented (see appendix 5) which were more concerned with the interests of parents. There was also the need for the parents to introduce themselves to each other initially as they had not previously met. As stated, the data from each focus group was analysed using the same processes subsequently employed for the semi structured interviews. This involved line by line analysis, initial noting, developing emergent themes and clustering, or searching for connections across emergent themes. One such theme identified was 'childhood events shaping self identity'; derived from the vivid accounts which each participant offered of their earliest experiences. The way in which this theme led directly to the opening

question for both teachers and parents is described in full in sections 3.5 2 to 3.5.4.

A second major finding to arise from the focus groups was the degree of difficulty each participant had in defining or distinguishing between the verbs to 'educate' and to 'parent'. For parents, this confusion arose predominantly from discussion of the second 'prompt' (see appendix 5);

"It is parents, not schools that have the legal and moral responsibility to ensure their children are educated. Parents do not expect teachers to bring their children up, teach them good manners or act as social workers". (Independent blog 2010)

For teachers, the confusion was apparent from discussion of the first 'prompt' (see appendix 4b);

"Teachers are the key to social mobility... politicians should dwell on the single most important agent for doing well in life, the teacher". (The Guardian.co.uk 2009)

The findings described above subsequently led to the questions in each of the semi structured interviews relating to the definitions of 'to parent' and 'to educate' (see appendices 6 and 7).

As can be seen from the above, the focus groups were not based around any 'questions' designed by myself, rather on a series of wide-ranging and open ended prompts. This represented my attempt to elicit data offered

freely by the teachers, hopefully representing areas of interest to them, rather than myself.

3.4.4 Rationale behind the use of Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are one of the most fundamental tools used by qualitative researchers working from an interpretivist perspective (Charmaz, 2004). They may appear in many forms, lying on a continuum from structured to unstructured. The structured interview is often adopted when 'the investigator decides in advance exactly what constitutes the required data' (Lyons and Coyle 2007, p.41). This resonates with the metaphor offered by Kvale of 'interviewer as miner', where knowledge is conceptualised as being buried within the participant and capable of being revealed, 'uncontaminated' by the miner' (Kvale, 1996 p.3). This approach is, I feel, too rigid for the purposes of my research, firstly as I had no predetermined idea of what may constitute 'required data' and secondly because I acknowledge the interview and its findings as a collaborative endeavour, constructed between myself and the interviewee.

At the other end of the continuum lies the fully unstructured interview, one which sees the *'interviewer as traveller... entering into conversations with people encountered and inviting each to tell their own stories of their lived world'* (ibid, p.4). Whilst the unstructured interview provides the interviewee with a blank canvas upon which to paint their own picture, it may not offer the degree of focus required to generate data pertaining to a given area of research.

At the centre of the continuum lies the semi-structured interview. Given the open and fluid method of enquiry, the data produced by the semi-structured interview is necessarily complex, 'rich and thick' (Geertz, 1973) and was chosen for this piece of research because it affords a degree of flexibility, whilst retaining the potential for an in depth exploration of a particular topic (Charmaz, 2004). As Kvale describes it, the semi-structured interview

'has a sequence of themes to be covered...yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told...' (1996, p.124)

As stated, the semi-structured interview is ideal for the purposes of my research as it allows the interviewer to follow the road taken by the participant rather than prescribing a route in advance.

3.4.5 Development of the semi-structured interview schedules

As previously stated, the semi-structured interview schedules were developed using data gathered from focus groups (see appendices 6 and 7). In addition, one pilot interview was conducted for each group, again drawn from colleagues within my EPS.

3.4.6 The pilot interviews

These proved encouraging in terms of the richness of response elicited and to be very valuable in refining the content and nature of my questions. A particular example from the 'parent interview' pilot was my opening question, which had initially been around **first** experiences of being a parent. For my participant, (and as borne out in the subsequent

interviews), this provoked uncomfortable memories of a time when she was not in a “good place” in her life. At her suggestion, this question was changed to concern the ***proudest*** moments as a parent, thus prompting happier memories and ones which she was happier to recall and retell in detail.

In the ‘teacher interview’ pilot, my question around ‘what makes ***a*** good teacher’ was interpreted and answered as ‘what makes ***you*** a good teacher’? This was experienced as a deeply personal question, and one which the participant initially found hard to answer. Again at the suggestion of the participant, this was amended to two specific questions, asking both aspects, but seeking a general and less threatening response first before moving to a more personal reflection on them as an individual.

Feedback from both pilot interviews led me to explain the intended format to the participants more explicitly at the start, including the need to detail more transparently the ‘path’ of my questioning from the general to the specific.

Due to the difficulties encountered in recruiting parents to take part in my research, I took the opportunity to undertake the teacher’s semi-structured interviews once the data from their focus group had been analysed. Each was conducted at a place and time convenient for them during the school day when they had no teaching commitments and each interview lasted for approximately one hour. As with the focus groups, refreshments in the form of tea and biscuits were offered and a more general question was

asked initially in order to make the situation as relaxed as possible and to stimulate discussion. Each interview was audio recorded after additional, informed verbal consent had been obtained. This process was subsequently repeated with each of the parents at a quiet location within the school which had been set aside in arrangement with the SENCO.

3.5 Data analysis; the process

For my analysis, I chose to adopt the approach described by Smith et al (2009, p.82-103, see appendix 9) which allowed a thorough examination of the data generated both in the focus groups and the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

3.5.1 Line by line analysis

This entails a line by line analysis of the transcript through repeated reading and re-reading. For me, this also entailed listening frequently to the recorded material in order to stay as close as possible to its 'essence' as recounted on the day (often during long car journeys, turning them into fruitful 'data analysis sessions'). This process also helped when trying to 'imagine' the voices of the participants during subsequent readings of the transcript (as per Smith et al). As previously described, the focus groups and interviews can, and should be seen as a product of collaboration between researcher and participants. A growing familiarisation with the text revealed a gradual building of rapport and trust throughout, which in turn led to more candid responses and personal disclosures.

3.5.2 Initial noting

Writing notes and comments is a vital aspect to the development of emergent and super-ordinate themes. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe them as 'often primarily conceptual in nature' (p. 72); they help the researcher to draw subsequent links between clusters of data or themes to begin to fit them into an overarching explanatory concept. Alongside my line by line analysis of the transcript, I made a number of notes and comments which served to highlight and identify a number of important and recurring themes. As described by Smith et al, this initial level of analysis was indeed most detailed and time consuming as it represented my attempt to make sense of a huge amount of information. At this stage, these notes took the form of comments on what was being said, focusing on what seemed to be of importance to the participants – both from the words used and the weight and emphasis they were given. This initial noting phase is particularly crucial given the iterative nature of IPA and the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual notes made here formed the basis of my subsequent analysis.

In practice, the initial notes were made in the left hand margin of the transcript. By way of example, one such initial note made during analysis of the teachers' focus group concerned the vivid nature of each participant's memories from their own school days, such as:

Participant 3 *"he was a gentle giant...he was absolutely ginormous (sic), six foot six I think, ginger hair and beard, he just seemed really gentle and fair"*

Note: detailed physical description, height, beard, ginger, and attributes, fun, gentle, fair

Participant 2 *"I remember my friend coloured the desert in blue and the sea in yellow and she was scary: she used to have a spotty leopard type dress and she put the fear of God into all of us!"*

Note: very detailed physical description, blue desert, yellow sea, spotty leopard dress... and psychological... 'fear of God'

3.5.3 Developing emergent themes

Having completed the stage of making initial notes and comments, despite the data set in fact increasing substantially, the focus of the analysis shifts from the transcript itself to the set of notes produced. Kvale (1988) makes the point that transcriptions actually transform a conversation into a narrative discourse, which runs the risk of decontextualising the data. For me this step represented an uncomfortable 'leap of faith' as it re-emphasised to me the importance of keeping my notes, comments and thoughts as faithful as possible to the essence of the original interviews. Smith et al note, however, that if exploratory commenting has been conducted correctly, *'it will be very closely tied to the original transcript' (p.91)*. In line with the outlined method, emergent themes, such as they became, were noted in the right hand margin. This marked the transformation of notes into more concise phrases and the move to a slightly higher level of abstraction whilst at the same time maintaining the essential quality of the text itself (Smith 2008).

As Smith et al elegantly phrase it:

"Themes are usually expressed as phrases which speak to the psychological essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual" (2009, p.92)

By way of example, the initial notes from the focus groups, detailed above, eventually became labelled under an emerging theme of *'the vivid and enduring nature of childhood memories of school'*. Other emergent themes were arrived at, at least partially, through the process of numeration – put simply as a reflection of the number of times the word/phrase occurred throughout the transcript. Two such themes were 'manners' and 'parents as role models', which were alluded to by all participants throughout the course of the focus groups and subsequent interviews. It is important to stress that in my analysis, such themes were highlighted as emergent themes not just for the *frequency* with which they manifested themselves, but also because of the apparent importance attributed to them by the participants.

In the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, this process produced the first table for each participant, headed 'initial list of themes' (see chapter four and appendices).

3.5.4 Clustering, or searching for connections across emergent themes

In this continued example from the focus group, the emergent theme labelled *'the vivid and enduring nature of childhood memories of school'*

became part of a potential super-ordinate theme called '*Childhood events shaping self identity*', itself initially an emergent theme (a process described by Smith et al as 'subsumption' p.97) which acquired a super-ordinate status through its ability to encompass and express a series of related themes.

Included within this theme were initial notes derived from powerful extracts from the data, such as:

"I can remember hearing my mother tell my aunt that no good would ever come of me because I was, you know, total crap...and I can remember her saying no good will ever come of that child, she is a waste of time...and I remember thinking 'I'll show you, you bitch'. And I say 'why am I sitting in this chair now?' Probably because I heard her say that about me and I wasn't going to let it happen because I knew, actually, that I was a good person inside..."

Note: Is this an incident that may have influenced her life in terms of why she is a teacher now?

This led directly to the focus in the subsequent semi-structured interviews on motivation and personally held values, and the first question regarding role construction: *Thinking back as far and as widely as you like; why do think you became a teacher?*

Smith and Osborn (2003 p.72) note that, 'as an adjunct to the process of clustering', it may be useful to collate examples of words or phrases from the data which support related themes using a word processing package. Payne (2008) is also of the opinion that researchers may find it useful to

'consider the use of qualitative data analysis software" (p.77). Gibbs (2002, p.11) points out however, that while software such as NVivo makes "qualitative analysis easier, more accurate, more reliable and more transparent" the researcher still has to bring to bear their interpretation and thoughts on the data. In practice, I found the method of analysis described previously to be simple and effective enough in its own right and therefore did not feel the need to use NVivo as I had initially considered.

In the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, this process produced the second table for each participant, headed 'clustering of themes' (see chapter four and appendices).

3.5.5 Final tables of themes for each participant

The next step, as suggested by Smith et al (2009) was to create a final table of themes for each participant, ordered coherently. This involved giving the clusters of themes identified above a name which represents the superordinate themes for each person. At this stage, some of the emergent clustered themes were amalgamated or dropped as suggested by Smith and Osborn (2009), p.72) because they 'neither fit well in the emerging structure nor were very rich in evidence within the transcript'.

3.5.6 Continuing the analysis with other cases

Smith et al describe two options at this juncture: one is to analyse the data from the next participant using the themes from the first to guide that analysis, the second is to begin the analysis afresh. As I wanted to treat each participants' account individually, I opted for the second method (as

recommended by the authors), whilst remaining disciplined to discern repeating patterns from the data. As such, I was open to acknowledge new issues emerging and was able to respect convergences and divergences in the participant's accounts.

3.5.7 Creating a master table of themes for each group

Once the data from each participant had been analysed, a final table of themes for each group was produced. This involved a process of prioritising and reducing the data to create a coherent picture which reflected the views of the whole group, whilst maintaining the integrity of each individual account.

3.5.8 Creating a narrative account

Finally, the data contained within the various tables for each participant and group was translated back into a narrative account. As Smith et al describe, the division between analysis and presenting a narrative account is, to some extent a false one, as the process of analysis goes on throughout the writing up phase.

3.6 Validity

Yardley (2007, p.235), considers the extent to which 'establishing the validity of research in qualitative psychology can be problematic'. In addressing these concerns, she describes a number of procedures for enhancing validity which I have considered for the purposes of this study.

The first of these is the process of 'respondent validation', one in which participants are engaged dynamically in the research process through invitations to comment on the process. In this way, their views are sought and incorporated at stages other than simply the initial phase of data collection. Though 'not always either feasible or appropriate' (p.242) in some cases, I considered it to be both for the purposes of my research given the limited number of participants, the relative ease of access and the length of time between initial data collection and the final report. Following the production of the tables of themes for each participant (see appendix 10), I contacted each person by telephone and email offering them a face to face opportunity to consider and comment upon my initial findings. Due to personal circumstances, one participant was unable to take part in this phase of the analysis. In the remaining cases, three chose to meet personally, one corresponded via email and the other opted for a telephone conversation. In each case, I presented and explained the main themes I had drawn from their interviews, noting the areas which they queried or particularly agreed with. I incorporated the information gained through member checking in the findings and discussion section, making it clear in each case where this had come from. In hindsight, and perhaps given the luxury of more time and more ready access to the participants, I would have instigated this phase a little earlier in the process and attempted to set up an open dialogue between myself and the participants. Nevertheless, I feel that the information gained and the way that it was incorporated into the

participants' accounts served to ground them to the data and adds credibility to the findings.

The second process is one of triangulation, as a means of 'enriching understanding of a phenomenon by viewing it from different perspectives' (p.240). Attempting to corroborate the participants' accounts in some way was neither feasible nor desirable; indeed, an elicitation of *their lived experience* was the express focus of this study. I was, however, able to introduce 'different perspectives' to the data through presenting my preliminary findings to colleagues in the Educational Psychology Service. This was done both on an individual basis (giving each a full set of the tables of themes showing the process from initial noting to preliminary themes and seeking feedback), and in a subsequent open group discussion. The results of this are discussed in the following chapter.

The third process of validation employed was one of 'disconfirming case analysis' (p.242), described by Yardley as searching for data that does not fit the general themes or patterns identified (for an example of this, see the findings for teacher 'C' Eleanor in the following chapter which, in part, deviated from those of the other teachers).

The final process described by Yardley and employed in this study is 'the paper trail' (p.243), which can be used to link raw data to the final report. In terms of the focus groups *and* the semi-structured interviews, this can be seen through examining the stages of analysis from initial noting to emergent themes and final themes (see tables of themes, appendix 10), as

well as the expanded narrative described in chapter four and the conclusions reached in chapter five. This study also transparently details the influences of the pilot focus groups, pilot interviews and subsequent member checking and triangulation processes described above.

3.7 Strengths and limitations of methodology and methods chosen

Qualitative methods, which rely on the recording, analysis and interpretation of *words* as data present many challenges to the researcher. These include the labour intensiveness of data collection, transcription, and analysis. In addition, IPA, in keeping with qualitative research more generally, has been criticised as a 'vague' and 'soft' methodology (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007) and one which relies upon 'assumptions, interpretation, human action and the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Clandinin, 2007 p.358).

Miles (1979, p.590) further warns against the potential dangers of discovering that:

'An earthy, undeniable, serendipitous finding is, in fact, wrong'. Miles (1979, p.590)

Clandinin, (2007) however, elegantly defends the qualitative perspective, with reference to the notion of 'blurred knowing' (p.25). This emphasises the tentative and variable nature of knowledge within human science research and privileges the search for 'authenticity and resonance' above that of validity and replicability.

Heron (1981) concludes that:

'where the human condition is concerned it is better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong; better to own a fruitful confusion than to mask it with irrelevant precision' (p.165)

In addition, any findings centred on small scale studies such as this one will necessarily have to contend with the limitations imposed by a lack of generalisability. This issue is addressed by Merriam (1998) who justifies and validates the use of a small scale study design thus:

'To gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved...Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research' (p.19)

As such it meets one of the goals of this dissertation, namely to guide future EP practice through greater understanding of the issues.

Having previously described the basic tenets of IPA, I will now consider a number of the 'key elements' of the methodology described by Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005), considering their strengths and addressing each of them in turn with direct reference to my thesis.

1. *'IPA is an inductive approach (it is 'bottom up' rather than 'top down'). It does not test hypotheses, and prior assumptions are avoided...'*

The premise of much recent research and government legislation, as described in the previous chapter, is that teachers and parents should strive to work closely together in order to improve outcomes for children. In order for this to work effectively, it may be that an implicit *assumption* is made that

two groups understand each other, know what each expects of the other and actually have a shared expectation that they should work together.

Smith and Osborn (2003, p.55) argue that research questions in IPA should be framed 'broadly and openly', adding that there is no attempt to test a predetermined assumption or hypothesis posed by the researcher. Instead, the aim should be to 'explore, flexibly and in detail, an area of concern'.

Accordingly, I do not start out with a given hypothesis regarding parents' and teachers' role constructions pertaining to themselves and each other, nor whether any such constructions may have a particular effect on their working relationship.

2. Researchers reduce the complexity of experiential data through rigorous and systematic analysis...

According to Dey (1993), rigorous interrogation of the data is vital to the analytic process; without it we would be solely reliant on less rigorous tools, such as impressions and intuitions. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, although a relatively new approach to data analysis, has a highly systematic, well described and well documented analytic procedure (e.g. Smith, 2003 Willig, 2001 Smith et al, 2009 Smith and Osborn 2003). As such IPA, as employed in this study meets the criteria of 'transparency' and 'reflexivity' laid down by Elliot et al (1999) as benchmarks for generic qualitative good practice.

3. Analyses usually maintain some level of focus on what is distinct (i.e. ideographic study of persons), but will also attempt to balance this against an account of what is shared (i.e. commonalities across a group of participants)...

Whilst acknowledging that participation in interviews and focus groups is a necessarily socially constructed endeavour, IPA is an essentially idiographic approach to psychological research and so each of the contributions were privileged and considered individually before looking for commonalities and divergences which might suggest fruitful areas to pursue in the semi-structured interview schedule. Smith and Osborn (2003 p.67) advise that it is best to look in detail at the transcript of each participant before moving on to consider the others, case by case. Again, this mirrors the path taken by this study and follows the idiographic approach which begins with the particular and then moves on to the development of more general claims.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Due to the nature of the chosen methodology, any data gained is likely to be of a highly personal and relational nature. As such, ethical considerations are of prime importance throughout the process of IPA. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that the ethical responsibilities, negotiated jointly between researcher and participants throughout the study, and the relationships that may be forged and should seek to go further than simply 'doing no harm'. As such, all potential participants were briefed as to the nature and purpose of the research and signed, informed

consent obtained prior to any research being undertaken. Focus groups and interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, subject to additional participant permission being given. The process of analysis sought to honour the integrity of the stories told, recognising that ownership of the data remains with the participant. Anonymity was assured and maintained throughout the entirety of the research and coded anonymised data was seen only by the researcher and the appointed University supervisor. All participants were given opportunities to comment on and influence my findings during the course of the research and each will be given a summary of the research findings and offered a full copy should they require it on completion.

IPA, by its very nature, seeks an in depth understanding of lived experience. Parents and teachers may feel uncomfortable about discussing their true feelings in both the focus groups and in the semi-structured interviews. Parents especially may find it difficult or distressing to recall their childhood/school experiences if they consider it relevant in response to any of the issues that may be raised. Bearing in mind the potential power imbalance between researcher and interviewee, all participants were made explicitly aware that they may pause, stop or withdraw from the activity/research at any time for any reason. It is also possible that the school as an institution may fear that they might be described in an unfavourable light by the findings of the research, dependent upon the responses given by the participants. While the researcher cannot predict or pre-empt the nature of the findings, every

assurance was given that the research will be carried out ethically, sensitively and with due regard for all those who participate, either individually or collectively. All participants were informed that they may take a break, decline to answer any question or withdraw completely from the research at any stage without giving a reason.

3.9 Process of self reflection

“ Researchers should reflect upon their role in the interpretative and collaborative nature of the IPA interview, data analysis and subsequent publication...a successful analysis is interpretative, and thus subjective, so the results are not given the status of ‘facts’...although they must be transparent – grounded in examples from the data – and plausible to participants, supervisors and general readers...” (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009).

Whilst acknowledging a central role for myself as researcher in IPA, I feel that it would be disingenuous of me to ascribe a level of meaning to data without privileging the original emphasis of the participant to which only they and I had first-hand experience. IPA seeks to maintain ownership of the 'story' with the participant, and as such, member checking of focus group and interview responses are an important defence against the potential for researcher bias. The degree to which my interpretations of the data are seen as authentic and plausible by the participants has been of primary importance to me throughout the study, and form an integral part of my analysis and discussion of findings.

Throughout the course of this study I, as researcher, have worked closely and intently with the verbatim account of the participants whilst also bringing my own thoughts, beliefs, experiences and motivations (i.e. Trainee Educational Psychologist, 'forty-something' male, father of two, solution focused practitioner, essential optimist by nature etc) to bear in order to produce a lucid and coherent insight into the phenomenon in question. At each stage of the analysis, my notes and comments are available alongside the verbatim extracts from the transcript, showing the path from data to interpretation.

In transcribing the data verbatim, thought was given to include pauses, silences and unfinished thoughts and utterances. Transcription is in itself an important stage of analysis, as it allows the researcher to become more intimately aware of the content of the interview and offers a valuable opportunity for initial thoughts to start to take shape. Given the richness and complex nature of the data, there may be many ways in which the data could be interpreted differently. A balance must be struck between understating and overstating any claims made from the analysis: accepting the tentative nature of any interpretations whilst remembering that 'humility need not be an enemy of conviction' (Reid, Flowers and Larkin, 2005 p.196). In doing this I have been aware of my own motivations and theories, and how they may have influenced the questions asked and the issues I chose to explore. Thus, I have tried to ensure that I followed the participants' agenda and enabled them to tell their own story in their own way.

3.10 Concluding Comments

As this section of my research draws to a close, it is apparent to me that I have elicited a large amount of very powerful data and that my thoughts should move naturally to the presentation of my findings. In line with the ethical principles outlined above, I seek to represent the lived experience of the participants accurately, whilst making the process of my interpretation of those experiences as transparent as possible.

4.0 Presentation and consideration of the Findings

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents and discusses the findings generated by an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the interviews conducted with parents and teachers, which sought to address the following substantive research questions:

- 1. What perceptions do teachers have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 2. What perceptions do teachers have of the parents' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 3. What perceptions do parents have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*
- 4. What perceptions do parents have of the teachers' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?*

And the further subsidiary questions:

- 1. Are there areas of commonality and divergence in perceptions which emerge from the findings?*
- 2. If so, how can an understanding of these issues be addressed to enhance the working relationship between parents and teachers and improve outcomes for children and families?*

The aims of this chapter are to identify the main areas of interest or concern voiced by each participant, and then to present and discuss the key themes as derived from each group. I will then compare and contrast the views of each in relation to the research questions stated above.

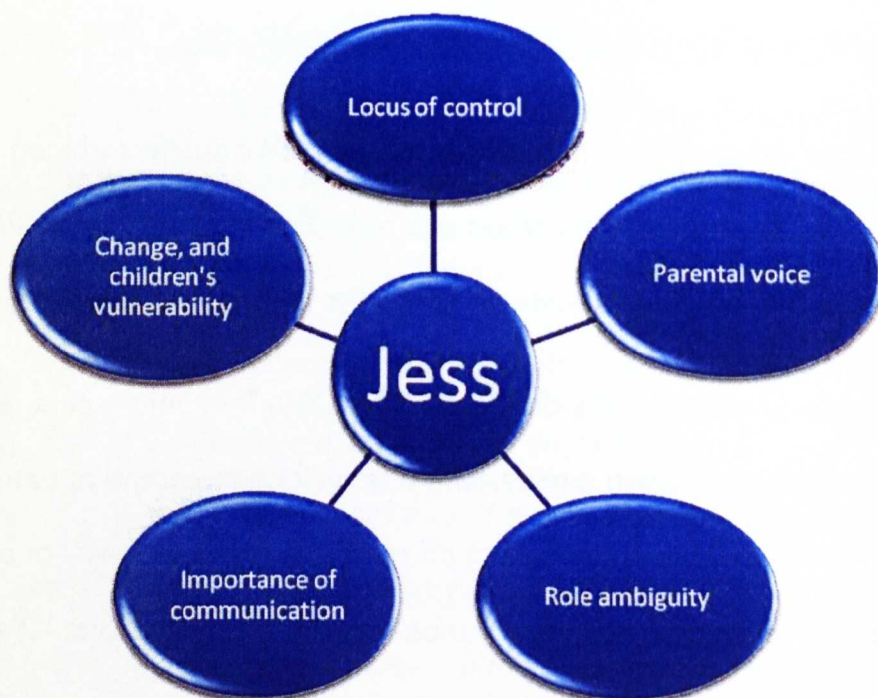
Firstly, I will present the views of the parents, individually and then collectively, seeing each quotation and reflection as a stitch or series of stitches in the eventual tapestry in which the overall picture can emerge.

This phase of returning the data back from table form into a coherent and living narrative has been a rewarding one as it had become apparent to me that no table could ever capture or do justice to the complexity of an individual's testimony, despite my repeated but fruitless efforts. It seemed to me that I had transformed their colourful testimonies into black and white, and that this process had helped to restore them back to full colour.

Throughout this chapter, I have chosen to privilege to a large extent the words used by the participants themselves. Whilst I am conscious of the length of some of the quotations used, it has been my aim to represent their views as accurately and faithfully as possible. With each example presented, I have sought to reflect the sentiments as they were expressed to me at the time, and with the sound of the participants' voices still in my ears and consciousness.

4.2 The Parents

4.2.1 Parent (A) 'Jess'



(Figure 4.1 Parent (A) Jess, themes)

From an analysis of the data, the following themes emerged:

Theme 1: Locus of control

As with all the parents in this study, Jess's responses suggest a tension between firmly accepting parental responsibility for their child, whilst at the same time feeling at the mercy of factors largely beyond her control. The first topic discussed was the division of responsibility for a child's behaviour between home and school, prompting the following response:

"No, it's with the parents...if parents got them to behave there wouldn't be a problem in school...which is easy enough saying... I've taught all my kids to

"Harder...the teachers aren't allowed to discipline enough nowadays. I believe that if they were allowed to discipline more my daughter wouldn't be as bad as she is. I can discipline her at home, I can ground her, they can't do that in school, they can keep you in for an hour detention, that isn't anything, and they can keep you in at dinner time, that isn't anything. Even to the point where I've been in a parents' evening and you can hear parents screaming at the teachers or you've got a kid screaming in the teacher's face 'What the eff can you do about it!'...and it's the truth, that teacher cannot discipline that child anymore, so I feel sorry for them nowadays...and they are correct in saying, 'What really can you do?'"

Adding:

"I wouldn't blame anyone, society has changed, and children and young people are getting away with murder!"

In an extension of this theme, individual agency is also seen as having been taken out of the hands of those supposedly entrusted with the ultimate responsibility for enforcing the laws of the land, the police. Once more, in line with all three parents, Jess referred nostalgically to the old days, in what I have termed the 'local bobby scenario':

"You done something wrong in the street and the old police bobby used to clip you across the head. You went home and told your mum, and then they'd clip you across the head too. Even the police, they can't do that no more".

Theme 2: Parental voice

As stated in the brief introduction, Jess is confident and prepared to challenge teachers when she feels they are not acting in the best interests of her daughter. One issue referred to many times by Jess throughout the interview was her annoyance at teachers who seem to assume that, through their professional judgement, they 'know her daughter better than she does'. The following extract describes her experience of one such incident:

"I've been in numerous times. 'You need to do it this way, it's what works, it's what's always worked'. They don't listen. Typical example – we argued last year – 'Don't put her in that tutor group with those three friends...those three friends, gave them the names. Beginning of the year, she's put in the tutor group with those three friends, she plays up, I get phone calls, I had emails..."

Jess goes on to describe her emotions at this incident:

"I get mad. I get mad. I'm in my workplace, 'I pre-warned you about this, I've, not so much argued, I've sat down and discussed it with numerous teachers, her head of year, her head of house, the head teacher, 'This cannot happen', they've done it anyway and now they come looking for me again, phoning me up at work, phoning me up after school, 'Your daughter's done this and been moved out of her tutor group (pause), that's not good, you can't do that, I've got to tell her off for something that could have been

avoided, for a situation that they had put her in. And I've got to tell her off because they didn't listen".

When asked what she thought lay behind this approach from the teacher she replied:

"Because some of the teachers in question think they know better than me as a parent, they think they know my daughter better than me because she's in their classroom".

An important element of Jess's parental voice is her ability and willingness to question professional 'expert' opinion. This is true not only in respect of teachers, but also health professionals, as the following short passage shows;

"Years ago, my daughter was diagnosed with ADHD. I'm a non-believer in Ritalin (laughs). I know it sounds dreadful, but...and I looked into it (pause) as a parent, it's amphetamine based. It does more damage to your brain than cocaine and you may as well give your kids a joint, in my opinion. You're making them addicted to a drug. And you know that many professions won't touch them if they've not been clear of drugs, like any drug. I wasn't having it"!

A third important aspect of Jess's parental voice is expressed in how she forms her opinion of individual teachers, and the amount of regard she has for their professional opinion as a result. For Jess, it seems that teachers

have to earn her respect through their actions and the force of their personalities, rather than taking it as a given from their professional status.

“ If there are problems in school, I’ll get the full story. I won’t believe the teacher initially. I do tend to support the teacher, but I do advise them that, as a parent, I do know my child better than you...well, you don’t know if that teacher’s telling the truth, just because they are the adult, it does not mean they are not turning it a little bit...she wanted it her way, personality clash, big style. ‘She wants it that way; she’ll have what she wants...Yes, she can do what she wants’!”

Theme 3: Communication

This could easily be included as an extension of the theme above, under the umbrella of ‘Parental Voice’. It was, however, alluded to sufficiently often, and from enough different angles, as to afford its inclusion as a separate theme and one which should be of prime importance and relevance to schools and teachers. Jess, throughout the course of the interview, listed not only her expectations of the school in this regard, but also pointed to the potential benefits and barriers presented by effective and less effective communication respectively.

Firstly, Jess raised the issue of a general lack of involvement and communication other than to pass on ‘bad news’, and expressed a wish to be more involved, especially in respect of more positive achievements.

"As a parent, I'd expect to be with any problem, called in, not generally. I'd like to hear about when they're good as well, when they've achieved something".

When asked whether this was her experience of schools, Jess replied:

"No, when they've been in so much trouble, they'll call me...apart from that, no, none the wiser..."

Jess also offered a solution to this issue, suggesting frequent contact by email, which may impact less negatively on the time teachers feel they can devote to parental contact. She also feels strongly that communication should be pre-emptive rather than reactive:

"Why have I got to wait for a phone call till a teacher doesn't want anything to do with my child anymore, when actually, when it started two weeks' ago, why didn't you tell me there was a problem? I see reports for my child. She's doing well in this, she's doing well in that. Well, if she's doing that flaming well, why am I having a phone call from you"?

Part of being a parent of a child at a modern Secondary school is dealing with its sheer size and number of students and teachers. In contrast to her experience of Primary school, Jess alludes to a sense of frustration and alienation at not having one identifiable person with whom she can communicate *personally*.

"I'm communicating, but they're not listening; stop passing me from pillar to post, and stop passing the problems from pillar to post. I'll phone up 'Yeah,

I've been told I've got to speak to Mr So and So about her', 'Yeah, she's passed on to Miss So and So', so then you're phoning up for that 'Yeah, their secretary's got it'. What's the secretary's got to do with anything? The secretary didn't teach the lesson. The secretary didn't get shouted at. I want to speak to the person".

For Jess, however, the main benefit of more effective communication seems to be its role in tackling unfair assumptions and in building an atmosphere of trust between parents and teachers. Her anger and frustration at being unfairly judged surfaced when describing a recent meeting with her daughter's tutor:

"She'd assumed I sat on my ass all day and did nothing...she was above me and she let me know it...She was quite well spoken in pronunciation and here I come with my accent and all (laughs). She looked her nose down at me, yeah. She said well if you're not doing anything, I want you coming in to deal with her. I said 'Actually I work'. I said 'Why would you assume I don't work?' 'Well, because you're in here now.' I said 'Because you called me in, and my girl's important!' Well, hello!"

Jess also describes a prevailing lack of trust between parents and teachers, which seems to apply both ways:

"They don't believe each other. I think it's a real issue, I know teachers look at me when I say 'Right, you'll be grounded for that'. No question, I'm not going to argue. They don't believe me. They seem to think I let her out and she gets to go and do what she wants".

In turn, Jess feels that schools are not always as open as they would profess to be, leading to a suspicion that that may have something to hide from parents. When asked whether she felt welcome within the school, Jess replied:

"No, I think it's more ...you're interested, so we'll isolate you and talk there. You get to see what they want you to see, and 'Look at our school, look at what we do'. I don't get to see a problem in the classroom and how a teacher deals with it. I don't get to see a kid kicking off and how that teacher deals with it. I want to see the true personality of those teachers interacting with my child. And not just what they want me to see..".

Theme 4: Role ambiguity

Jess describes a holistic and very wide ranging role for teachers; one which encompasses both strictly educational, and more moral issues. She is also very forceful in asserting that parents have this dual responsibility as well, somewhat blurring the boundary between her concepts of 'teaching' and 'parenting'. The sole dividing line, however, is expressed very clearly as unconditional love for your child, as evidenced by an intense and heartfelt piece of dialogue which I present at the conclusion of this theme.

As stated, for Jess, teachers have an important role to play both in the education and all-round development of children:

"As a teacher, I believe when you're trained to be a teacher, you're also trained to look at the whole package. The whole of the child, not just the

one, the whole, and I do believe that the social, and the manners, come under that whole...the social standard, they should teach them the rights and wrongs and not violence...'They're in school, they've done wrong, you're in charge of them, you teach them that that's wrong'...I'd like a teacher to encourage the child on how exciting the world is out there. How much can be seen and done."

Similarly, Jess sees her own parental role as multifaceted. When asked whether parents 'parent' and teachers 'educate', she offered the following:

"No! No! I teach. I'm a parent. I teach my children. I taught my children how to speak, I taught them how to write, I taught them how to count. I taught my little one how to speak Spanish. I taught them how to take things apart...that's my job...As a parent you can't rely on anyone else to bring up your children. Do something about it. It is my job to teach my child. It's the teacher's job to improve their education and further it and enhance it. As a parent it's my job to teach them things."

This view of largely overlapping roles has the potential, however, to blur the lines of responsibility and could lead to tension between Jess and her children's teachers. Whilst on the one hand asserting, '*They're in school, they've done wrong, you're in charge of them, you teach them that that's wrong*', Jess also wants to retain the ultimate control over responsibility for their good conduct within school and the sanctions which teachers can apply to ensure this. When questioned directly regarding who should

assume overall responsibility for children within school, Jess replied that it was a teacher's 'moral responsibility', adding, somewhat confusingly:

"I don't think teachers should have to, but I believe they should, if that makes sense!"

As alluded to in the introduction to this theme, however, Jess sees no such ambiguity when questioned about her perception of the core role of parenting:

"The main thing is, as a parent, no matter what, you must love your child. It doesn't matter, anything else. If you love your child, to me you will create a perfect young person. It doesn't always seem that way when you're going through it, but I think that's the main thing they need. If you love a child you'll teach them to have manners, you'll teach them to treat people with the same respect. To be a parent (laughs), I think some people would rather choose a death sentence! (laughs)... I wouldn't even say till 16 actually; you have children till the day you die."

This core role of 'unconditional love' was referred to in various forms by all parents and teachers in the study and represents a major difference expressed between the two groups in their outlook upon the children in their care, with teachers confined to a more 'professional' role.

In terms of a role for children, Jess's responses seemed to contradict each other in regard to being a child today. They suggest that increased freedom

and relative impunity against sanctions represent more of a poisoned chalice. When asked whether children have it easier now, Jess replied:

“So much easier. Because they get away with so much, they do get away. They’re a very lazy society.”

Despite this, Jess preferred the circumstances of her own childhood:

“Because you learnt more, you learnt more morals. It was a community thing. They don’t seem to have communities any more”.

Theme 5: Change, and children’s vulnerability

A common thread apparent from all of the interviews with parents was a view that the world had changed for the worse, along with a resultant perception of children as vulnerable; almost as under siege from all quarters of life and society. Given the intensity of parents’ feelings (as expressed by Jess above) towards their children, it is perhaps unsurprising that parents’ predominant concern is that of the ultimate safety of their child. It also represents another difference between the standpoints of parents and teachers, who did not voice these concerns as forcefully or vividly, more often reporting the opportunities afforded by a good education. Jess’s nostalgic view of the past is revealed in her accounts of life when she was a child, although her view of standards in society having declined is perhaps revealed in the positive way in which she depicts issues which could easily be recounted less favourably.

Firstly, she discusses the use of corporal punishment:

"I grew up with the cane and 'dread was my soul' they used to call it. They used to wipe our mouths out if you swore. You had to stick your tongue out and it got wiped twice if you swore... where I came from, we had use of the cane, they did use it. And you had the cane once and 98% of the time that kid didn't do it again."

Later, she describes working as a young child:

"I was working from the age of 11. Through the summer holidays I earned myself money. I worked in restaurants cleaning dishes. I worked in an onion factory. And now those children can't work, they can't earn money. What do they do?"

And, finally, even the merits of National Service:

"I believe they should reinstate discipline. But then I also think they should be made to go into the Army and sent to Iraq for a couple of years... National Service... Yes, bring it back!"

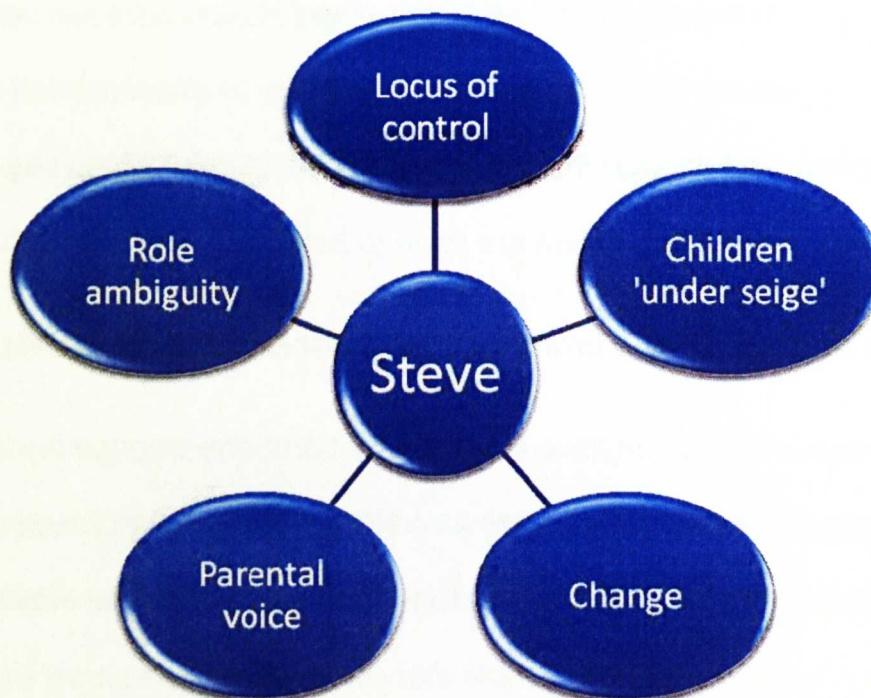
Early on in her interview, Jess offered me a candid account of her traumatic childhood. I agreed with her request not to divulge this information explicitly, indeed I would not have felt comfortable with doing so. I believe, however, that these experiences, along with her more general view of a society in decline, may have a profound and entirely understandable impact upon her view of the world, making Jess hyper-vigilant towards perceived threats to her children's safety:

“And I’m very defensive towards my children and unfortunately even more so... because I know I can go overboard (slight pause) but I can’t help that protective instinct. To me teachers have got now to check out that child’s background, find out the circumstances, find out if they can be helped, and I think that’s when the teachers are there to help.”

When I compared this to taking the role of a social worker, Jess replied:

“In my opinion, yeah they should do (pause) probably through my own upbringing, if teachers were more aware, they would have clicked there were things wrong... There was enough to see, and I feel the education system - who are the other people that see those children most - should be there to help the child that needs the help. They’re that net to protect the children that need that extra help, yeah, to me it’s the last form of defence”.

4.2.2 Parent (B) 'Steve'



(Figure 4.2 Parent (B) Steve, themes)

Throughout the interview, Steve expressed firm, long held beliefs, whilst at the same time being reflective and able to consider the implications of the views he was expressing. He was very conscious of change across all levels, from Government and society, to the personal capacity to adapt demonstrated by his own father. These changes were generally not seen as positive in respect of children's lives and again led to a perception of children as vulnerable and facing threats from all areas. Change is also central in his views on parental voice and the uncertain roles played by teachers, parents and children today. Although 'change' is presented (above) as a discrete theme, I have chosen to incorporate it within the other themes expressed. This follows from a 'member checking' session with

Steve in which he broadly agreed with the emergent themes presented to him, but strongly emphasised the role played by change in *all* of them.

Theme 1: Locus of control

As stated, Steve describes an ever changing world in which individual agency has been diminished to the extent that no one seems to be in charge of their own actions and where the locus of control has shifted away from individuals and towards a faceless 'system'. Again, this applies to parents, teachers and children. Parents' individual agency is perceived as being at the mercy of 'circumstances', which can affect them at many levels and reduce their ability to be the sort of parent they would like to be. The first of these is the pressure of having to work, expressed firstly in terms of his experience as a child and then, subsequently, as a parent:

"But it's only when you become a parent yourself you realise the reasons why they're not there. My dad was never there. My mum was very seldom there - Of course not because they were working weren't they? And I think of the number of times when my kids must have felt let down because I wasn't there at their - because I couldn't be. Because I know what it feels like. But as I said, when you first become a parent, with my own children, you can't make it".

When asked about the emotions provoked by this, Steve answered:

"Well, you feel sad for the kids. And with all the explanations in the world they don't - 'You don't want to come' 'You don't care'. I do care. And it

makes you feel sad really that you can't give them that little bit of support. You know, just being there. Just that little wave when they see you, you know."

'Circumstances' also include lack of financial resources, again described through a childhood experience but related to life today:

"Because I know when I was a lad we never had much money. I know that my mum and dad didn't have any money. But I didn't actually realise that until later on in life...I can remember saying 'Not eating mum?' 'No, I'm not very hungry, I'm going to eat later on with your dad...but when you become older you realise that she done it because there wasn't enough to go round. It was obvious, wasn't it? But (pause) it's life, isn't it... there are people that haven't got the privileges. Even today...oh god, you know lots of them."

Steve also sees teachers as relatively powerless to exert an influence upon children who do not conform to the wishes or standards of behaviour expected by the school:

"But they can't, they can't even discipline a child. They can't talk loudly to them without "I'll get social services."

Adding:

"They can't, can they? Not allowed to. Because it's Human Rights isn't it? I don't blame the school for that, no, I blame the school, but it's not their fault is it? Because they're not allowed to do anything."

In addition, when comparing the situation as he perceives it today to that of his youth, Steve alluded to the 'local bobby' scenario:

"Because you didn't challenge teachers in those days, you just, any kind of discipline, like, I know it's an old thing - everyone says it - 'Copper giving you a clout round the ear'... you don't do it again do you?"

When asked where the responsibility for this situation lies, Steve replied:

"Governments, society in general. We're not allowed – nobody's allowed to discipline anybody. No one's allowed to say 'You will sit down, you will do as you're bloody told'. They're not allowed to do that, are they? That's what's wrong. You can blame governments, you can blame society. I blame the Swedes... Yeah, Sweden, I blame the Swedes because they're the ones that actually started all this. Rights for children (laughs), that's a terrible thing to say (laughs). But you know what I mean? All children have got rights, of course they have. They have the right to be educated fairly. But I'm talking about they can have too many rights, can't they? In the wrong places, and I think school is one of the wrong places, they should be disciplined at school, and they should be disciplined at home. But everyone's too soft."

Theme 2: Parental Voice

In keeping with the idea of change, Steve perceives a world where parents have an increasing voice in the life of their children at school. He articulately reflects upon the implications of this, seeing both the positive

and negative sides of this development. His responses also suggest the potential this increased voice may have to create tension between parents, exercising their new rights, and teachers who may perceive this as a threat to their professional autonomy and practice. Parental voice is expressed through a willingness to challenge and question the authority of the teacher and also through Steve's differentiation between the 'sort' of teachers for whom he would have respect and those he would not.

Steve's willingness to challenge teachers' decisions is powerfully described in the following passage where Steve describes what his response would be if he thought his son had been unfairly treated:

"Then I would fight that child's right! I've actually done that with Clayton, the time they called me in and he'd whacked a child? He was playing a game that the school had actually banned and then they wanted to give him a detention. And I said 'No. How can you give him a detention for something you've caused? You know you let the children play a game that they're not allowed to play. You let him play it, knowing he can't play that kind of a game. So if he's reacted badly to something you've let him do..."

When asked whether he was sure this would be the correct response, he confirmed:

"Yes, without a shadow of a doubt."

Steve also differentiates between what he sees as 'old school' teachers worthy of respect, normally older, more down to earth and wearing a collar

and tie, and a 'new breed', who represent a different generation. When pressed for a description of the 'new breed', Steve replied:

"The soft namby pamby Green Party (laughs). Well it's just this vision that I've got, if you look at Question Time on the television... You've got the spectrum, haven't you? There's always the one at the end that's like 'You can't do that', the one on the left, yeah, all this namby pamby with children. Sometimes you look at the teachers and you think who's the teachers and who's the pupils, but it's true isn't it? They don't dress like teachers should; to me a teacher should wear a suit, collar and tie...But that demands respect!"

Steve also acknowledges a downside to an increased voice for parents in schools, in which legitimate sanctions are undermined or even beyond the power of teachers to enforce. When asked whether parents, in general, would back a teacher over a legitimate sanction, Steve replied:

"No, I don't think they would, unfortunately, in this day and age if a teacher really laced into a child because they wouldn't stop swearing or were really rude all the time, no I would think the parents would be up the school saying (pause)... but what can you do? If the parents won't admit that there's problem with their child, you can't win now, – the school can't win now, can they? The school can never win."

When asked how he thought teachers would respond to this increased voice and presence within the school, Steve answered:

"They're not happy...no they're not, not from my experience of challenging with Clayton (laughs), but I had to try to get my point over because I tried to say to her 'You caused the problem, not the child.'"

Ending on a very salient point:

"But she couldn't get that bit. I did raise my voice to her and made her cry, but that's not my problem is it, you've got to deal with parents haven't you!"

Theme 3: Role ambiguity

Steve initially expressed very definite views of the roles of parents and teachers in the education and all round development of children. When pressed, however, a degree of complexity, uncertainty and confusion around roles emerged. As with Jess, the uncertain role for children in today's society emerged, despite this not being a specific focus of the original interview schedule. The perceived blurring of the line between childhood and adulthood contributed, in turn, to the final theme of 'children's vulnerability'.

As stated, Steve initially expressed his view of the parent's role very definitely and succinctly:

"It's being there, it's not about material things, It's just being there when you're wanted, answering the questions that they ask and not imposing your will on them... And it's listening to them, you must listen to them, yes, you've got to listen to them. You've got to play with them and you've got to

do – It's not about money or giving them things, it's just being there for them, when they need you. Basically it's just being there and listening to them I think."

This degree of certainty over the parents' role, however, began to diminish when the roles and responsibilities associated with school were introduced:

"Well, I don't think your responsibilities ever end, but you sort of pass them on when the child goes to school, and when the child starts going to school your role... Yeah, I think your role diminishes... I wouldn't say stops, but as soon as you've walked out of the house to go to school, the school takes over."

Once a child is at school, the respective roles of parent and teacher appear to blur even further. When pressed to define the verb 'educate', Steve compared it with that of 'parent':

"It's the same kind of thing, isn't it? 'Parenting' is educating, isn't it?"

When pressed further, Steve replied:

"You educate your own children about the world, don't you, about what is, (pause) the world... Yeah, they're there to do the Maths, the English, the Geography aren't they? The education side of it, not that you can't help in that because you can do that just by taking them out... And my father would be educating us as we went round, about London. He was teaching us about the environment whereas as a teacher says 'Once two is two, two two's are four', you know. I don't suppose at the end of the day there is

much of a difference! (laughs) It's just that you're teaching different things, aren't you?"

Adding:

"I also think it's every teacher's job to help a child with their morals and manners, and god knows that it should be!"

The influence of change also permeates throughout this theme of role ambiguity. Steve views the teachers' role and that of the teaching profession in general, as having declined considerably in status during his own lifetime:

"And these people; their word was law. My parents listened, 'You're not doing this right with your child.' 'You've got to...' This was what teachers were saying to parents...times have changed so much. 'You don't tell me how to bring my child up.' Whereas years ago - teachers are obviously professional people – but they were professional people weren't they, they brought your child up. Your responsibility ended when the child goes to school... it's a different world we live in. I'm not saying it's a better world either (laughs)."

Alongside this changing role for parents and teachers, the role in life for children seems to have become an uncertain and challenging one, as I shall detail below.

Theme 4: Children under siege

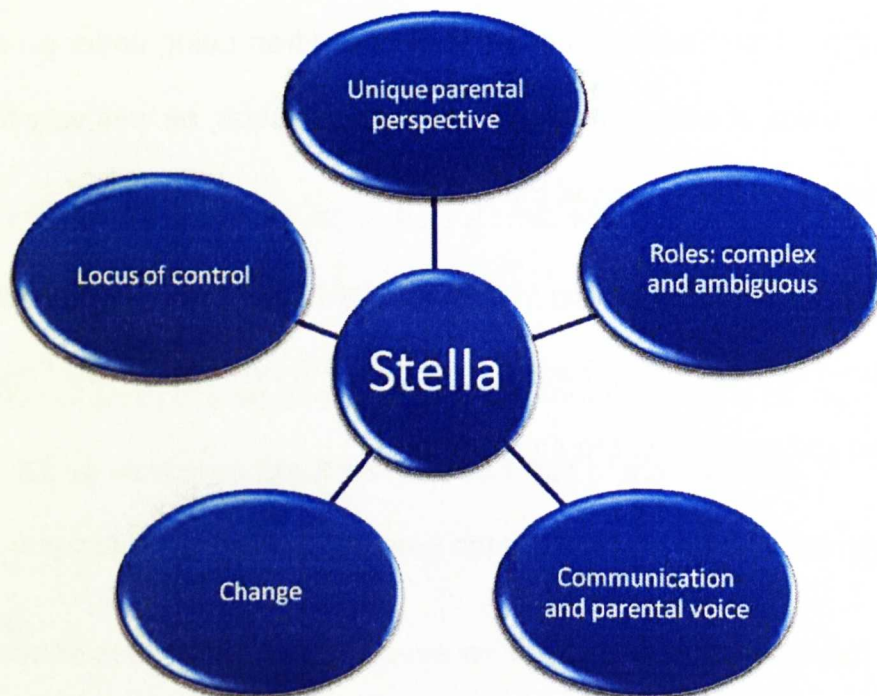
Throughout the interview, Steve's view of children being under pressure from all areas of society was apparent. In particular, he was very forthright in his views on being a child today:

"I wouldn't want to be a child in this world... There's too much pressure on them from everywhere... They're not allowed to be children are they? They've got to grow up too soon."

Adding:

"Well, there's all this pressure from everybody. They get sex shoved down their throat every minute of the day. They've got to have their Nintendo DS, they've got to have an Xbox, got to have the latest trendy clothes because they get the Mickey taken. It's not nice, I think that's the difference nowadays is 'You've got to do well. You've got to do this, you've got to do that. Because if you don't pass all of your exams you won't get a good job, then you'll end up like those down the road'. And it's not right. It shouldn't be like that...the violence. You know you can't walk down the street People are frightened to go out of their doors at night. I would hate to be growing up nowadays."

4.2.3 Parent (C) 'Stella'



(Figure 4.3 Parent (C) Stella, themes)

I believe that Stella's childhood experiences have fundamentally shaped her view of parenting, the role of teachers and her working relationship with them. Stella perceives huge societal changes between the worlds of her own childhood and that of today. As a result, a large emphasis is placed on the protection of children against wide-ranging threats, over and above a traditional 'educational' role for teachers. In light of these perceived threats, any interactions with teachers and other professionals regarding her children must be seen in the context of her view of them as 'miracles'. This underpins Stella's first theme; her unique parental perspective.

Theme 1: Unique Parental Perspective

Stella began her interview by describing her proudest moments as a parent. Her prolonged and emotional responses (which I précis below) give a clear indication of her intense feelings towards her children, and clearly distinguish her perspective on them from that of anyone interacting with them merely in a professional capacity:

"I'm proud every day. I'm proud for the fact that Pamela's come through all that she's come through and still got more to go through, I'm proud of the fact that every time they walk in the house they tell me they love me... So no, I'm proud of every day that they're with me. They're just amazing anyway. Pamela was diagnosed with the disease she's got, told that she would never have children. James was a miracle to start with. And then Robert was an even bigger one because...they gave him a 5% chance of survival. And I was also told that at the time Rob would probably be born without any limbs or things like that. And he's not. ...ahh, they're just lovely, it's just every day, it's the kindness they show. And although he doesn't like to be cuddled by other people, he loves nothing better than getting in bed with me on a Sunday morning, you know, and we have a good half hour cuddle. And I look at him and I think well 'You shouldn't be here but you are here... You know, so it's a miracle. And I'm very proud of them. Very proud of them!"

Theme 2: Teaching and Parenting roles: Complex and ambiguous

Stella describes an incredibly hard, wide ranging and complex list of roles for parents and teachers. As with the other parents, she sees the line between them as blurred and finds great difficulty in distinguishing between the two. Firstly, in terms of parenting:

“To nurture, to protect, to (pause) not map out a future but to provide a future. I think that’s what I’d have to answer to that one.”

Adding:

“Yeah, yeah. Yes, it is a teacher’s job to educate but it’s also a parent’s job to carry that education on when they come home so that they do the homework and things like that. You know, so I don’t think a parent is just a parent. They’re all sorts aren’t they? They’re counsellors, they’re teachers, they’re doctors, nurses, whatever. So I don’t think your job starts and finishes when that child goes to school in the morning.”

When asked about the role of teachers, Stella described the following:

“The majority of things. I don’t think a teacher is a mother or a father. But I do think that they’re a counsellor and if the child’s having problems I think sometimes a child can go to an outsider of the family, and talk, because the closeness of the family, they might be uncomfortable talking about something like that.”

I then introduced the notion of ‘loco parentis’, asking whether a teacher could or should ever adopt a parenting role:

"Yeah, but I still don't think a teacher can become a parent to... and I don't think that it's fair on a teacher to become a parent to all sorts of children. So yes you do – I'm contradicting myself there – I don't, I never... Yeah, I don't think a teacher can become a parent. I think it's the parent's job to become the parent. So I think there's a fine line, you know, between teaching and mothering. Mmm."

Encouragingly for the school, whilst Stella has very high expectations of teachers, she also acknowledges the pressures that they must face on a day to day basis:

"I think it's very, very difficult being a teacher, I do think it's very difficult being a teacher. Basically because they walk in in the morning and it's not something they can release at 5 o'clock at night or 6 o'clock at night. Sometimes I presume that a lot of them can go home and go 'My God, you know, that child has got lots of problems.'"

Theme 3: Communication and Parental Voice

A common thread running through Stella's interview is her desire for open, honest communication with the school. Ideally, this communication will be pre-emptive, (in time to stop problems developing), will include positive feedback as well as negative and will be of a personal nature, through one named *consistent* contact. Any perceived lack of communication is met forcefully, and demonstrates Stella's exercise of parental voice, again opening up the potential for tension between school and parent. Again, on a positive note for the school in this study, Stella's negative experiences

have all occurred at previous schools and she is very appreciative of the way she is communicated with at present. Communication not only affords the obvious benefits of exchanging information, but also serves to reduce the potential for mistrust and misunderstandings. As with Jess, Stella feels that schools may have a tendency to 'cover things up'.

"I like to think that I've got a good communication now, open communication, between the school and I... but I think that comes from me being pushy... I don't think – I think a lot of people within the schools like to think or like to project it as being not 'perfect' but 'smooth'. You know and cover a lot of things up. I don't think there's an awful lot when the kids grow up of possible opportunities out there. So I want to be behind my children to say I've done my best to give them the best education going. And if that means pushing and pushing and pushing, I will do. You know, that's why I want the open communication with the school."

Parental voice is further expressed through Stella's willingness and perceived 'right' to challenge teachers. She refers to the personalities of certain teachers as being central to the working relationship and describes her resentment when a teacher tries to assume a dominant position:

"I think a teacher and a parent should work together anyway, because if one fights against another you're on a losing battle straight away. So I think majority of the time the parent should always back up the teacher... But there is some circumstances where a teacher can take a dislike to a child anyway. And then I'd review my options. I don't think it happens all the time

but I think once in a blue moon you will get one of these teachers that will say 'I'm the teacher, you're the parent. You will listen to me... And then my back would automatically go up and I say 'Hang on a minute.'

The benefits of positive communication, for both schools and families, are revealed in the following exchange which also emphasises the power of simple gestures:

"I do think that overall this school is a damn sight better, it's brilliant... Yes and... They do, they do. And any problems they're straight on the phone to you. You know, so, and that's what I want."

When asked about contact concerning 'good' news, Stella's response indicated her level of satisfaction:

"Yes, James gets a little card through that says 'Well done James' and I think that's fantastic!"

Theme 4: Change

Once again, Stella perceives a changing world, one in which 'old fashioned teaching' and 'old fashioned parenting' are declining along with values, respect and society more generally. When describing a 'good' teacher, Stella preferred:

"An old fashioned teacher, not a new one, because I think the old fashioned teachers listen and take pride in what they do each day. And I think the new teachers, the younger teachers, sometimes it just feels like a job to them."

Adding:

“Generations ago you had a lot more respect for teachers... because they was (slight pause), I don’t – you looked at them differently. It was always – they were the authority figure... like I say, the older class teacher, is still in it because they like what they do. They like coming to school every day. They like nurturing the children, they like teaching the children. And I think with the younger generation... I don’t think their heart is in it as much as what the older generation is.”

And concluding:

“Circumstances change I suppose. Perceptions change. Society’s changed...”

This exchange seems to capture parents’ feelings that teachers should *lead* society yet they seem merely to *reflect* it. Younger teachers especially seem to be part of the perceived decline (i.e. part of the perceived problem) rather than part of the solution.

Theme 5: Locus of control

Even a strong, articulate and committed parent such as Stella made several statements which suggest that her children and her abilities as a parent are at the mercy of factors largely beyond her control. As well as the general decline in society and standards described above, Stella also makes reference to specific circumstances and the influence of others:

“Because there’s more people out at work now, and there’s a lot more children that go home to empty houses, there’s a lot more children that’s sat in front of the TV, as babysitters. There’s a lot more computer games, and children tend to be pushed away more so from the parenting than what we were. There’s less discipline now than what there was, and if there was respect at home they wouldn’t be like that.”

Stella also describes her dislike of bad manners and swearing. Again, she sees her ability to influence this as diminished by others:

“I do not like swearing. I don’t think there is a necessity to swear, I don’t. You can have a conversation without using ‘f’ words or ‘b’ words or anything else.”

When discussing where responsibility lay for children’s use of bad language, Stella offered the following response:

“ I don’t think it’s – not necessarily the parents’ or the teachers’ fault because they’re going to mix with other children and what you bring up in your house is not necessarily the same as what someone else brings up, because the parents swear. It’s not all, it’s not just that. I’ve heard police when they talk to young children or young adults, right. And they’ll swear at them quite openly.”

In contrast, Stella alluded to her youth and the ‘local bobby’ scenario:

“And I know when I was a youngster and the local bobby, he caught me smoking. He caught me smoking and I went ‘Oh, shit’ and put the – and he

whacked me around the ear 'ole and then went and told my mum where she give me one, yeah... Now, you'd have him sacked, wouldn't you, you'd be in court with hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of compensation!"

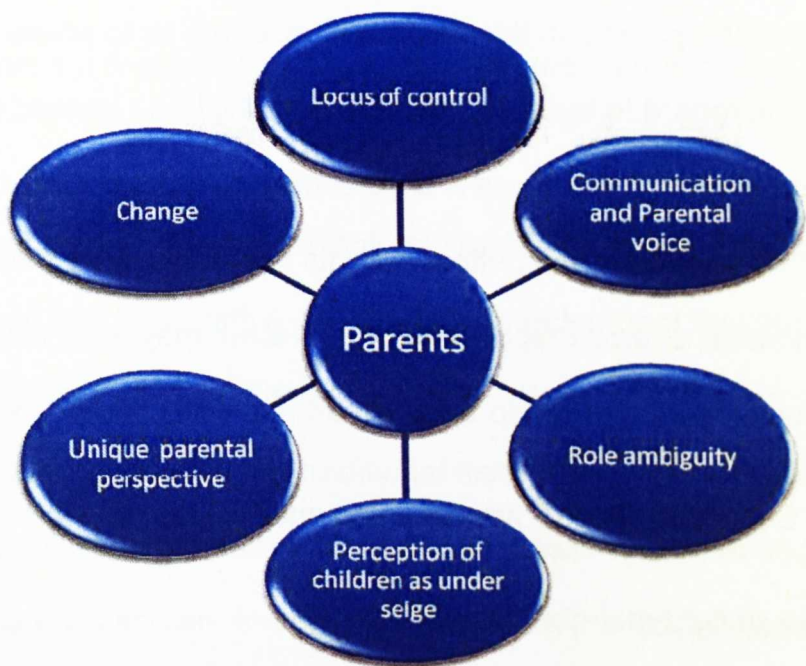
Finally, Stella talks about the role of children in today's society. In line with the idea that individual responsibility is in decline, she implies that the locus of control has shifted to those least equipped to exercise it effectively; children. Stella asserted that children have it easier now but that she would much rather have grown up in her day. When prompted to explain this, Stella alluded to the lack of certainty in children's lives:

"I think it's a lot easier as in rules and regulations within schools now because teachers haven't got the same sort of authority as what they did years ago... It's really difficult because circumstances are different now from what they was years ago. I think now they get away with a lot more than what they did years ago. So I think it would be easier in some respects but then in others it was easier in my day."

Rather in line with the premise of William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', (in which children stranded on a desert island are forced to create order for themselves) Stella seems to be suggesting that a perceived power shift from adults to children has given them more freedom and relative impunity from sanctions, but that this may represent a poisoned chalice. Perhaps, in this scenario, children are not getting the sense of security afforded by firm boundaries, increasing the need for a strong and effective partnership between teachers and parents.

4.2.4 A summary of parents' views

In this section, I offer a picture which I feel is representative of the parents' views as a whole, rather than presenting it as a homogenous 'group view'.



(Figure 4.4 Summary of parents' views)

Theme 1: Change

Change is an overarching theme for all the parents, one which permeates all other themes and will be considered more fully within them. In general, it is perceived in an unfavourable light, linked to a decline in standards throughout society, uncertain roles for teachers and parents and a dangerous and difficult world for children to grow up in.

Theme 2: Locus of control

“Governments, society in general. We're not allowed to – nobody's allowed to discipline anybody. No one's allowed to say 'You sit down; you will do as

you're bloody told'. They're not allowed to do that are they? That's what's wrong. You can blame governments, you can blame society. I blame the Swedes!"

It seems that the parents in this study are uncertain as to where the locus of control lies in regard to teachers, parents and children. Instead of individual agency and responsibility, there is a perception that control has been ceded to a faceless 'society'. With neither parents nor teachers perceived as being in 'control', overall responsibility for children may be at risk of not being assumed by either group and instead rest with children themselves.

Theme 3: Communication, Parental voice and inherent tension

"Then I would fight that child's right!"

Effective, two-way communication, conducted on an equal footing is expected and demanded by parents as a right. Whilst at a whole school level this has the power to break down barriers, mistrust and misconceptions, it may also open up the potential for conflict and tension between individual parents and teachers. Increasingly, parents feel that they have a right to voice their opinions forcefully within the school arena. With this increased voice comes a willingness to challenge the authority of the school, and individual teachers in particular. Respect for teachers is no longer a given, instead depending upon the individual personality of the teacher. For the parents, respect can only be established through communication and face to face contact, and is essential as it forms the cornerstone of any working relationship. Parents also see themselves as

the natural 'expert' on their child, irrespective of the views and professional status of the teacher.

Theme 4: Role ambiguity

"So I think there's a fine line, you know, between teaching and mothering."

Parents describe very complex, difficult and multifaceted roles for both themselves and teachers, with a definite acknowledgement that the challenges involved have increased over time. Along with the perceived changes in society, however, the traditional distinctions between parents' and teachers' roles seem to have blurred. While teachers have adopted the role of loco parentis and are increasingly viewed in the 'social worker' mode, parents feel they are expected to engage more fully in their children's education and assume many of the roles associated with teachers.

Theme 5. Unique parental perspective

"He loves nothing better than getting in bed with me on a Sunday morning, you know, and we have a good half hour cuddle. And I look at him and I think 'Well you shouldn't be here, but you are here.'"

Despite the general confusion in roles described above, parents have a unique perspective on their own individual children. This is borne of an intimate knowledge of their lifelong experiences, often in the face of adversity and is characterised by unconditional love and acceptance. It is

perhaps inevitable that this perspective may clash with that of a teacher charged with the responsibility for 30 or more children, and who lacks the in depth personal knowledge described.

As can be seen from the diagram (see figure 4.5 below), only 'professionalism' is seen as the unique aspect of a teachers role when considered alongside that of parenting. In addition, the parents' perspective is decidedly 'partial' rather than 'impartial' and individual in terms of scope of responsibility rather than concerned with the needs of the wider group.

Theme 6. Perception of children under siege

"I wouldn't want to be a child in this world."

All of the parents in the study stated that they would rather have been a child in their day than now. Threats are perceived at every level, from domestic violence and sexual abuse, street violence, peers and unrealistic academic and employment pressures to 'the system', in the form of governments and society. Parents feel that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly and are not able to enjoy the childhoods experienced by them. Even relative hardships such as child labour, corporal punishment and National Service are seen as positives against the perceived lack of morals, respect and discipline of today. Accordingly, parents see a primary role for teachers as one of protector, safety net and social worker, over and above that of 'educator' in its strictest sense. This represents a potentially differing perspective between parents and teachers.

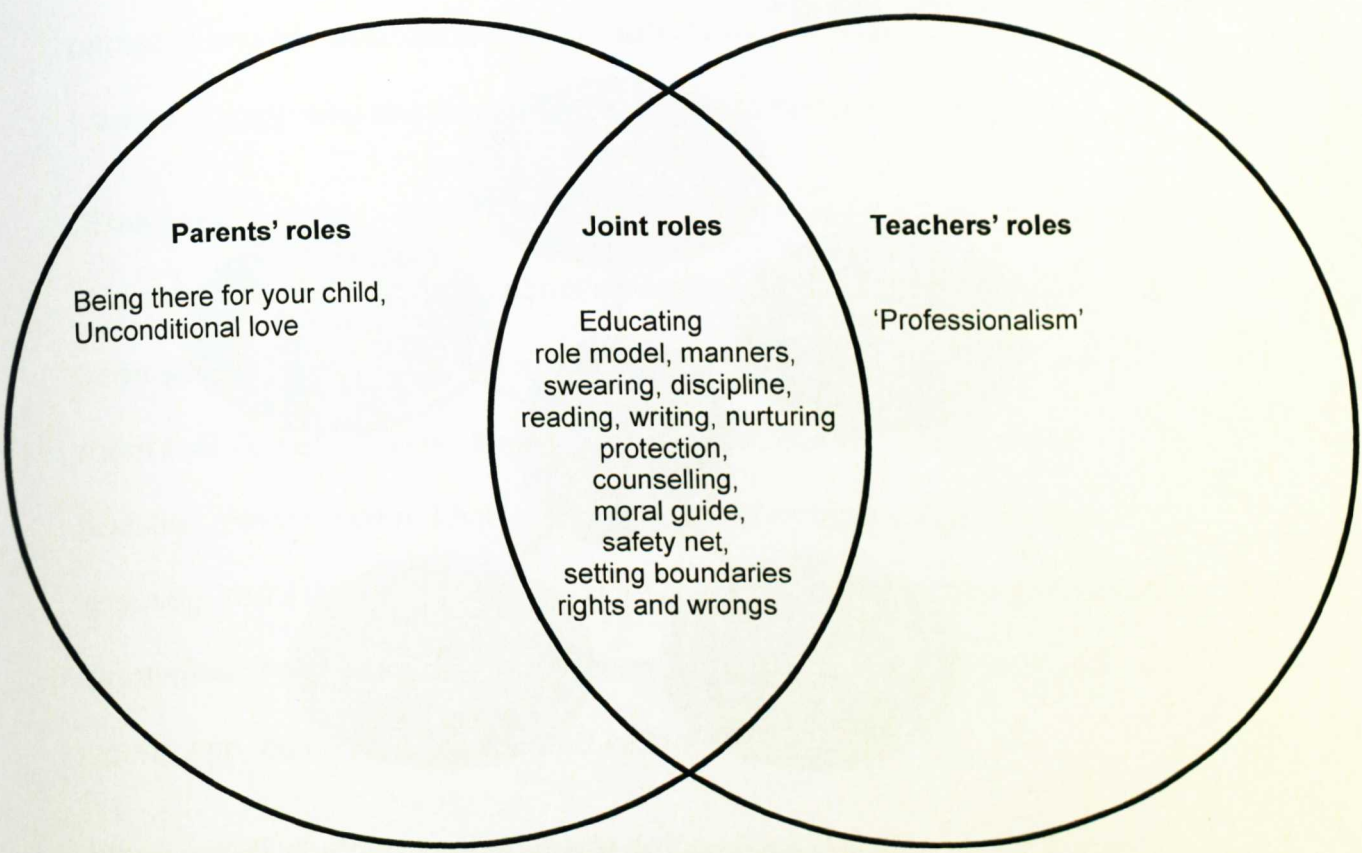


Figure 4.5: Diagram to depict parents' views of respective roles

4.3 The Teachers

Having presented the views of parents as a discrete group, I will now present the views of the teachers, first individually and then collectively.

4.3.1 Teacher (A) 'Maggie'



(Figure 4.6 Teacher (A) Maggie, themes)

Maggie is an experienced teacher who has worked at this school for many years. She, like all the teachers in the study, articulated a lifelong love of education and learning and sees communication with parents as central to her role as a caring and dedicated teacher.

Theme 1: Investment of self in role

I believe that Maggie very much sees *herself* as a teacher; for her teaching is more of a vocational calling than a job. This stems from her earliest experiences of working, where she was already attracted to the 'caring professions'. This, in turn, may derive from her own experience of being parented and her realisation that '*somebody has to break the cycle*'. Firstly, I asked Maggie why she thought she may have become a teacher:

"Erm, I was working - mind you I was already in a similar role. I was working in a school for boys with emotional difficulties, most of them probably, had been abused in various ways and therefore had social problems. Some of them had Tourette's, erm, anger management. Some of them were autistic...(pause) Hmm, I had always looked after my younger sister (pause.) You might think that would make me not want to do it I suppose... Sometimes I felt annoyed, erm, I mean I was left on my own from quite a young age, being a housewife and looking after my sister."

I then asked whether she had made a conscious decision to avoid that:

"Huge, definitely, yeah. My mum and I had a big chat once... and she started talking about her mum and I said 'But somebody had to break the cycle'. So what made me be able to do that, I don't know, because I don't understand why my mum couldn't? Because I have, and I don't know why she couldn't. And sometimes I feel a bit annoyed about that but, you know, you have to work through it."

I then returned to my original question about Maggie's motivation to become a teacher:

"Well, I suppose now I've talked about that, maybe that was it, maybe it was to make up for (pause) to be (pause), my mum. Yeah, so I wonder if that's what I mean, I wonder if I am trying to build on inadequacies that may or may not be there from other teachers and from parents in general I suppose. Maybe I want to give people more of an opportunity than I had. Maybe that's why? I don't know (laughs)."

Later, Maggie describes how she has her own *personal* system for collaborating with parents and rewarding students. This is clearly important to her, given the language used and the lengths that she goes to in ensuring that these rewards are acknowledged and valued by students *and* parents: *"Do you want me to laminate it?"*

"Yeah, I do, yeah. I personally have my own thing of 'smilies'. I do my own thing where I give them smilies and when they get five smilies they get a little postcard home and ten they get a different one and then when they get to twenty, they get a postcard home and they get a goodie bag, a gift, a lollipop... And I just think - because it's nice for parents to know when they're doing well. And I've got certificates I give them at the end of their tests. And I insist that they take them home to show their parents. I'll say look- I pretend, I tease them and say 'It's got to go on your wall'. And then you see their faces and I'll say 'It doesn't have to but please just show your parents'. Even if it goes in the bin afterwards it doesn't matter but just let

them see... Yeah (laughs), I think most of them know. I don't often find any in the bin here or folded up or, and some of them ask me to laminate them. I'll say do you want me to laminate it?"

This theme is extended in the following quotation regarding where Maggie thinks her role with children begins and ends, revealing her degree of personal investment in the students:

"(long pause) Erm, for me it doesn't. (brief pause) I can't, I can't switch off. I go home thinking about these children sometimes, and sometimes I dream about them and think about how I can make things better for them. So, I'm not very good at turning off that thing. I know a lot of teachers can leave here and they don't think about it anymore but I think about them all of the time."

Finally, Maggie sums up her intensely personal approach to teaching when recounting a difficult interaction with an irate father:

*"And she texted her father 'the teacher's not helping me' and he phoned back. I told her off for being on the phone so she said 'It's my father, you need to speak to him'. And he just shouted at me down the phone about how I was ignoring his daughter and not helping her. **And that's why I'm here.** I feel so strongly about wanting to be here and helping these children."*

When I detailed this theme of 'investment of self in role' during the member checking session, Maggie agreed wholeheartedly and did not wish to add anything except that it characterised her position precisely.

Theme 2: Inner confidence and capacity to support.

Maggie seemed to display great confidence in her own abilities, both personally and in terms of supporting students and parents. This view is seldom expressed overtly, although it becomes apparent throughout the entire transcript. Confidence in the role of 'teacher' seems to stem from an early love and respect for education, inspirational teachers and their own subject, a position and status to which they themselves have now aspired.

"And it's, for me, my curiosity and my questions. I was always asking my teachers and wanting to know why we do things and how things happen."

And, in considering the 'ideal' teacher:

"Someone who inspires a (brief pause) – you can't do it for everybody – some subjects aren't to everybody's taste, but I guess I wanted to inspire an element of interest and fascination for maths, because I love maths. And I think obviously everybody is going to say their subject filters through into everyday life but maths is one of those things I think people can't argue with, it is there, it's all the time."

This inner confidence is particularly relevant in two aspects of Maggie's working relationship with parents. Firstly, it enables Maggie to stand her ground when dealing with potentially challenging parents. (This may also

resonate with the parents' expressed view that teachers 'know their child better than they do')

"And I was talking to her about her son and she basically said I didn't know what I was talking about because I was new. And I had no, I didn't really know her son and didn't, really, that I was wrong I was almost certain she was wrong and that I was right but I suppose it made me question myself, made me feel a bit insecure. But I was pretty confident that I was right."

It also affords her the emotional and intellectual capacity to support parents in their hour of need:

"So I was like OK. 'Right, we need to start helping each other then.' And then she just sort of burst into tears and said 'Do you think there is something wrong with him?' And I think she just needed somebody to tell her it wasn't that he was just naughty, and that she was a terrible mum, because I think she's had that a lot... She needs support. So that was really good, I think for both of us. She is doing really well so I think it helped her, yeah."

Whilst agreeing unreservedly with the *capacity* to support, Maggie picked up on the *confidence* aspect of this theme during member checking. She described this outward show of confidence in dealings with parents as 'not always innate' and suggested that, when confronted or challenged, this confidence may be 'acted'. When asked about the imperative to appear confident in these situations, Maggie stated the frequent need to "carry on

anyway” with any course of action which she, ultimately, deems to be in the best interests of the child.

Theme 3: Parental voice: communication versus tension

For Maggie, in common with the other teachers in this study, increased parental voice seems to represent both an opportunity and a threat. Whilst all expressed a need and personal desire for greater communication, each spoke of their frustration when directly challenged by a parent. Maggie first describes the benefits of good communication in terms of increased understanding, for both the child and the parent:

“So that was really good, I think for both of us. It was good for me to find out some information about him, for me to understand him better.”

Maggie’s strong commitment to communicating with parents is shown in the impassioned language she uses when describing the loss of a traditional ‘parents’ evening’, replaced instead by a ‘review day’:

“The only thing I don’t like is I don’t like review day. I absolutely hate review day. Because I don’t get to see the parents of the children I teach. I get to see the parents of the pupils I tutor... 15 minutes of ‘Are you here?’ Yes, tick. I don’t teach them, I don’t know how they get on. It doesn’t tell you anything. To me that is irrelevant, I think. Some of the parents would like to see particular teachers. You know, they’ll say ‘Well my daughter’s got a particular problem with her history teacher.’ And I don’t even know who the history teacher is or what kind of character they are. So, that’s my big thing.

Completely pointless in my opinion, I don't know if there was a vote on it. I don't know, but I think it's pointless!"

Evidently, then, Maggie's commitment to working and communicating with parents is genuine and heartfelt. In common with all three teachers however, Maggie alludes several times during her interview to an expectation of support from parents for her decisions; indeed she gave the following reply in response to a question about ideal parents:

"Supportive (pause) Someone who will support education at home as well, someone who will try and engage a bit, give you a bit more information, ask questions, be supportive of the decisions you make and back them up at home. I think they should be supportive and you can get massive ranges of that, actually support with academic work, but then also supportive of behaviour and rules in the school. You know, you've got parents who are 'Absolutely right, I shall be taking that X-Box away', and then you've got other ones that are like 'But it's a stupid rule. My kids should be able to wear nail varnish if they want to.' So there's that kind of support educationally and then also behaviourally."

This raises the question of whether teachers really welcome or expect two-way communication, or instead just value the opportunity to put their views across to parents in the expectation of support. If the latter is the case, then attempts by parents to exert real influence over their children in the classroom may be perceived by teachers as a threat to their personal and professional autonomy: *'I had to bend'*

“Yeah, I am prepared to but I don’t think I’m often asked to. And if their parents said, (pause)... Oh yes, I did have a letter from a parent saying that their child was cold and they insisted that they wore a coat in the lesson. I couldn’t (sigh) do anything then. I had to bend. Yeah, yeah, Aghhhhhh!”

When describing the worst case scenario regarding communication with parents, Maggie offered the following:

“I suppose actually the worst, the worst (pause, sigh) the worst case is when they will not let you issue your school sanction. When you are saying ‘this is what I would like to happen’. They won’t allow it to happen. They won’t allow their child to be in detention, they won’t allow the child to go on report, because, what can you do then?”

During member checking, Maggie agreed entirely that communication with parents is central to her role, but also reiterated her “huge disappointment and frustration” at parents who challenge her role of loco parentis during school hours and who, ultimately, “interfere with her job”.

Theme 4: Parents’ role: Support and challenge

In keeping with the parents in this study, teachers also described complex, multifaceted and overlapping roles for parents and teachers. Again, the defining role for parents is seen as one of unconditional love and acceptance of your child, in contrast with a more detached and professional role for teachers.

“(Pause), Loving, because some of us can be a bit rubbish. You know, you might not have, there might be some skills that you are short on but I think if your child knows that you love them then they’ll forgive you pretty much everything. So loving and caring.”

And for teachers:

“Passing on knowledge and skills and educational skills such as the ability to read and the ability to explain yourself verbally or written, the ability to research, filter out, you know; know when something is relevant or not relevant to your argument. Expressing yourself in an appropriate manner, to the right audience, that kind of thing. But I mean, at the end of the day, I suppose we are trying to teach them to pass some sort of exam, some sort of piece of paper that will say ‘I know this much’, that they will then use in the work place, or to get them to a relevant workplace.”

Maggie sees a further role for parents however, one which involves challenge as well as support for their children. This theme resonated throughout the teachers’ interviews, and contrasts with the parents’ perception of children as vulnerable and their preoccupation with keeping them safe:

“Looking after it? But then that’s not really, (pause,) because you could look after something by not doing anything and making sure that nothing else happens and that’s not really parenting either. You have to be active, you can’t be passive. I think a lot of parents can be passive and they just, kind of, to them it is look after likes it’s a dolly – make sure nothing touches

it, make sure it gets fed, make sure it goes to sleep but they don't give them life skills, erm, and set boundaries. They just let that child bring themselves up but they protect it from a distance. Yeah. So if you're just looking after, from here, they'll grow, but they'll grow weirdly, do you know what I mean? Because you're not pruning and looking after and taking bits off and adding things in. Like a bonsai tree! (laughs), Yeah, a bonsai tree! (laughs)."

When reminded of this 'bonsai tree' metaphor during member checking, Maggie reiterated that parenting should not just be *"about all the 'lovey dovey' stuff"*, but also about *"discipline, the basics and the nasty horrible side"*. Maggie offered a further example of a puppy which, though you love it, needs to be house trained – *"you still need to teach it the rules"*.

Theme 5: Role ambiguity

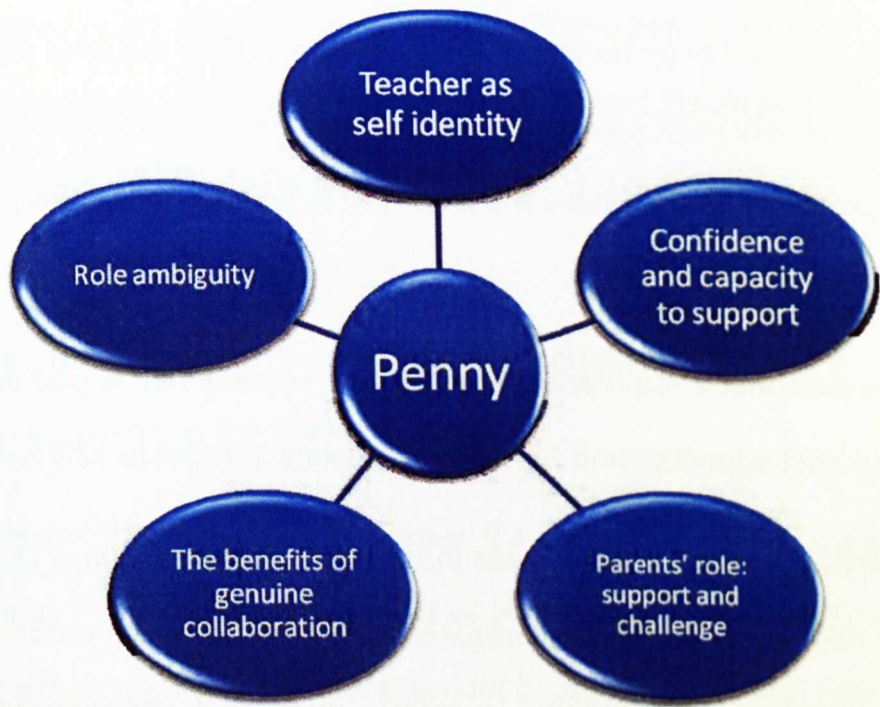
Reflecting on this prompted Maggie to compare her view of parenting with that of teaching. In line with the other participants, she introduced an element of ambiguity into the two roles:

"So parenting is that (pause) but it's also being quite active and, erm, (slight pause), educating (laughs). The two go together don't they? (laughs). So loving and caring. And then supportive. Erm, I can't think of the word for it, erm, (pause), what's the word I'm looking for? Like a teacher, I suppose!"

The dawning realisation that she found the roles both similar and somewhat ambiguous seemed to genuinely surprise Maggie, prompting self conscious laughter. This was repeated during member checking when I read out the

above quotation, causing Maggie to add “*well, I suppose I can’t argue about that one then!*”

4.3.2 Teacher (B) ‘Penny’



(Figure 4.7 Teacher (B) Penny, themes)

Penny is an experienced teacher who has worked at the school for several years. Her commitment to the role, especially in working closely and effectively with parents, is evident throughout the focus group, interview and subsequent member checking opportunities.

Theme 1: Teacher as self identity

For Penny, teaching as a vocation is in the blood, and stems from her earliest childhood experiences. This is apparent from the opening question concerning her earliest motivation to become a teacher:

"I wanted to do something useful... I got an awful lot from some of the teachers that I had teaching me, they were really inspirational. And I either thought I wanted to go nursing or to go teaching. With teaching you see, you can actually work on something and have more of an impact over a longer period of time and see the results of what you do. And so I think it was, that sort of philosophy."

Penny's personal investment in teaching as a career was forged in her battle against adversity and family expectations in order to fulfil her goals:

"The expectation of my family was that I would be a telephonist like my mother had been and then my sister was and that I would do that. And when I actually announced that I wanted – because it was almost on the cusp of when you could leave at 15 still – and when I said I wanted to stay on and do my GCE's as it was then, it was absolutely shock, horror because nobody did that!... staying on in school, further education, the whole thing. I did have a time when I didn't live at home because it was very, very contentious me doing it and so I sort of really bucked the trend in my family, so to speak."

As with Maggie, there was also an element of wanting to compensate for her own childhood by helping others. Penny recalls feeling neglected as a child and having to overcome the low expectations of her mother, repeating sentiments expressed in the focus group:

“And teachers were interested in you as people, and that was actually really important, because up until that time I didn’t feel as though anybody was really interested in me as a person...and as I told you before, I can remember hearing my mother tell my aunt that no good would ever come of me, and I thought ‘I’ll show you, you bitch’. I wasn’t going to let that happen!”

Penny’s identity as a teacher in comparison to herself as a person is summed up succinctly in the following response:

“Oh, no, I think it’s actually quite the same. It’s one and the same thing. The fact that I’m up early and I’m thinking about what I’m doing the next day and the next month and what would make school better for that child, I think makes me a better teacher, and also gives an insight in my personal life as well! (laughs).”

Theme 2: Confidence and capacity

Part of Penny’s identification with the role of teacher is, I believe, wrapped up in her positive view of teachers and love of education in general. As with Maggie, succeeding in school and having achieved the status of

'teacher' gives her the intellectual and emotional capacity to work effectively and to extend the hand of support to others:

"I had a really good English teacher and she was – she could make things come alive, she was interesting. She was really good. And she taught poetry – actually there were two of them and they taught poetry like absolute magic! And it's left me with a love of poetry, you know, Ted Hughes and the whole sort of, you know. The whole thing has never left me."

Penny has confidence in her own abilities as a problem solver and also in the everyday decisions she is forced to make as a teacher:

"I sort out problems. With parents I think you have to be able to offer solutions, you have to be able to look at the problems that they've got at home; you have to be able to work to support them."

And later:

"It's actually, it's making that decision and having the strength to make a decision quickly, stick with it, see it through, and persuade somebody that is the right decision to make at the time."

As stated, this inner strength and confidence also gives Penny the capacity to offer emotional and practical help and support to students and parents:

"Sometimes they just need to talk to somebody. I can think of a number of students that I've had at this school. We've had issues with drugs and alcohol and everything else. And I can think of parents that we have

supported. You know, because we have the same sort of philosophy. They haven't had family, you know, but we've, the school, we've been the person that they've called for support."

Penny's responses also suggest that the balance of power in the parent-teacher relationship lies with the school:

"You know, there's one thing about having control – it's actually being able to sort out that situation. But that's my decision."

Penny's description of her childhood teachers gives us some idea of the regard she holds for the profession and may reflect the way she (subconsciously) perceives her efforts as a teacher now. I place 'subconsciously' in brackets as this is very much my interpretation rather than a view espoused by Penny, a particularly down to earth and self effacing individual.

When I detailed this theme of 'confidence and capacity' during the member checking session, Penny laughed and said:

"Blimey, you're exactly right, this does reflect absolutely how I feel inside, I did not think it would have come across like that...but you must have caught me on a good day (laughs). On a 'draining' day, sometimes I have to say "Let me sleep on it", but I always come through, I always do".

Theme 3: Parents' role: Support and challenge

As with Maggie, Penny defines the primary role of parents as one of love, commitment and caring, but also describes the need for them to be active

in promoting ambition, aspirations and the opportunity to flourish rather than just keeping them safe. Again, this may stem from a more positive outlook on education and children's prospects in general.

For Penny, the core of parenting is:

"I think it is people actually loving a child because they want to have that child, and then having the commitment that their life, and what they want to do, isn't going to interfere with the bringing up of that child. That's the most important thing. And it doesn't just go with how much money is in their – it goes with the caring."

Penny also describes a more proactive role for parents, however, one which requires them to prepare a child for the outside world:

"And that at every phase they actually think ahead what they are doing. You know, that they think ahead about their education, not just that they naturally send them to the local school, but they actually find out about it. That the child isn't just stuck in front of the telly. And that they make the child interesting and sociable before we get them. There is, a child who's in Yr 11, a real child in the school, he couldn't go on work experience because he had no experience to go on work experience with! There was still you know, to shield, to, not that willingness to sort of let him go."

During the member checking session, I discussed this and one of my proposed overarching themes with Penny, that of the different perspectives which parents and teachers may hold in terms of 'safety' versus

'opportunity'. She agreed, and felt very strongly that this was an accurate reflection of her experience as a teacher, calling it the *'Learn to ride the bus scenario'*. For Penny, this metaphor details the difference between a parent, who may see all the difficulties and dangers for their child associated with travel and the outside world, and the teacher who wants to teach them *'to learn to read a timetable, to get aboard the bus and to set off for wonderful destinations unknown'*.

Theme 4: The benefits of genuine collaboration

Penny talked at length about the benefits of close collaboration with parents. These benefits apply to parents, teachers and students in terms of increased understanding and a 'watertight' relationship. Firstly, parents and teachers have to perceive the need to work together:

"And the two of you have to be on board, and going down the same river on the same boat for it to be effective."

The subsequent relationship can provide a secure base from which children can develop:

"And so the child hasn't got any cracks in that relationship. There's no way that he can wriggle between us... yeah, because we have it watertight, yeah?"

Such close relationships do not come easily however, and, for Penny, are based on personal knowledge and encouraged by sharing good news as well as bad:

"...And I'll very often phone them up not to complain. I'll phone to say 'She's had a really good day'. You know. But I think they tend to think that school is going to be bad news, (pause). Do you know what I mean? If the school phones up it's going to be to moan rather than to say we've tried this and it's been really good or 'he's actually in on time today. That's brilliant, well done for getting him in'. You know, or 'Well done for getting his favourite box of Weetabix'. Yeah, we're not very good – I don't think schools in general are very good at saying 'this child's done great.'"

When asked what percentage of communication might concern bad news, Penny replied unambiguously:

"I'd say it was 90%."

Theme 5: Role ambiguity

A clear theme which emerged from my meetings with Penny is one of role ambiguity, where the line between teaching duties and parenting responsibilities is very much blurred. Penny sees a very broad and holistic role for teachers, extending beyond the traditional '3Rs' and into the all round development of children.

For teachers then, the role is more than helping children to pass exams:

"I think you actually need to see beyond all the data of what kids can do and can't do and it's what they can do and can't do personally that needs sorting out as much as a phonics programme or hearing them read or whatever else. It's actually making them have self confidence. It's leading

them in directions they don't necessarily want to be lead in because of family pressure and everything else. It's about being a 'considered friend' and by that I don't mean being over friendly. And it's being reliable, doing the things that you say you will do. It's taking them around another college, or seeing something they wouldn't do, or doing some local history or just doing anything that sort of widens their horizons because they've got a very narrow perspective which is (pause) it's the route to school, the route home and the route to the bedroom to go on the X Box."

A further example of this is shown in the following quotation regarding the need for personal hygiene as an important element of fitting in with and being accepted by your peers:

"Then the child's a target. And so I think parents need to – the kid's need to come in wearing clean clothes, and it is difficult, and nobody's saying it's easy, but we have been known to get kid's clothes off them, shove them in the washing machine on a quick wash, bung them through the tumble drier and back on the kid's back, you know?"

Despite this willingness to become involved in areas more traditionally associated with parenting, Penny is also aware of the potential for tension this creates:

"There are skills of independence that parents need to teach the child that then helps you to educate them. So if you get the parenting bit right the education bit naturally follows. And if not, then the teacher is trying to 'parent' as well as educate. And that's when you get the conflict."

4.3.3 Teacher (C) 'Eleanor'



(Figure 4.8 Teacher (C) Eleanor, themes)

As can be seen from Figure 7 (above), Eleanor sees her identity as 'teacher' as entirely separate from that of her core self. She also sees the formal role of 'teacher' as discrete from that of 'parent'. Despite this perception of qualitatively different roles, Eleanor's personal investment in parents and the working relationship is seen as vital to positive outcomes for children.

Theme 1: Love for the profession.

In keeping with the other teachers, Eleanor's early experience of school and education is characterised by success, a love of learning and a high regard for her teachers. This became apparent when asked about her earliest motivations to become a teacher:

“Probably a number of reasons, I had some really good Primary School teachers, they were quite inspirational who really, really got me interested in learning new skills, and my maths teacher was brilliant, was absolutely amazing. And then they push you on and push you on and it’s always this constant ‘Oh I want to learn something else now, what’s next, what’s next?’ And yeah, so I’d joined my new school and then I thought ‘Oh, I’ve only been here a year, what else can I learn?’ So I’ve always been, you know, I love to take on lots of new skills and I like to be learning all the time and I think probably because of that, and I was obviously surrounded by really inspirational teachers... It’s, I see a lot of what I do in them still, and it’s still successful.”

Her regard for the profession is evidenced by her statement about where she is now: a ‘place’ Eleanor clearly takes pride in:

“I was every teacher’s worst nightmare probably, going ‘I’ve finished that now, what can I do?’ ‘I’ve finished that now, what can I do?’, and I think they saw me as a kind of a right pain in the backside. But obviously I’m really lucky that I had that capacity because I wouldn’t be where I am now, as a teacher, because it is a profession.”

Theme 2: Confidence and capacity to support

In keeping with the teacher’s theme of confidence and capacity, Eleanor reiterates her experience of succeeding at school, and this again could account for her readiness and ability to offer help and support.

From her early gift for learning:

“And I picked it up really quickly, as kids do...”

Eleanor has derived a sense of personal agency and autonomy:

“There’s got to be 900 different ways of doing things and I always like to do things a little bit differently. I would have the capacity and the resources to go ‘Right, let’s just do it!’”

This equips her with the intellectual and emotional capacity to support parents:

“I have the capacity to change, to be flexible and to be prepared to be totally and utterly challenged.”

I was also taken with her ‘throw away’ phrase (above), “as kids do”. This, for me, is a clear demonstration of her experience of success in education. For many children, ‘picking things up really quickly’ is *not* their experience, as and such will *not* mirror the perspective of many of the parents she interacts with.

Not only does Eleanor feel that she has the capacity to support, she also sees it very definitely as part of her role:

“You would hope that that parent unconditionally loves their child, even though they may have absolutely taken every ounce of energy out of them, but a lot of our parents can’t do that, that’s why it’s so very difficult. And that’s where a really supportive teacher can come in.”

Eleanor's 'can do' attitude is wonderfully captured in her description of a new phrase she has learned, and one which she has embraced within her teaching practice:

"I spoke to an amazing teacher, or retired teacher, and she said 'Yeah, I've got an answer for that'. I said 'Really?' She said 'Yeah, I always say add this word to the end of the sentence: 'yet'. And I did it and it worked! It was amazing! Yeah. It was a kid; you know when you get those kids who 'can't do that'. Even before you start 'I can't do that'. You show them the lesson objective and they say 'I can't do that'. And you say "Ah, what I want you to do, is add this word onto the end of the sentence: 'yet'. 'Repeat the sentence'. 'I can't do this yet'! It was great. It was just brilliant!"

Theme 3: 'Teacher' as discrete from 'self'

As an overriding theme of her interview, Eleanor sees a clear divide between her role as a teacher and that of her own personal identity:

"I've never defined myself by what I do. If I'm teaching, they'll see me 'teacher in role' and that's me. But that's still to do with, you know, that's still work. When I go home, I'm me."

Eleanor also displays a professional detachment between herself and her students:

"Well, I'm quite professional. I do like to keep them separate because I think it's healthy. I've never been in a friendly conversation with a student and I

don't think that's a bad thing. But (pause), no I am absolutely and utterly 100% professional."

And later:

"But for me, I would never treat the students I teach in the same way that I treat my own children...Because I am totally professional, I'm doing a job."

This professional detachment extends to Eleanor's understanding of her role regarding 'loco parentis':

"(pause), I think the role of 'in loco parentis' develops, I think the longer you're here, but (pause) it's not a bond (pause) it's, a working relationship."

Eleanor's sense of detachment also applies to her relationship with parents. When considering possible barriers between teachers and parents, she offered the following:

"School is loaded with all these misconceptions isn't it, as we know. But certain sorts of them are healthy misconceptions, you know...Because I don't think that it should be (pause): it's a professional work place isn't it? If we could all (pause), if parents thought 'Oh, you know, we could be all chummy with the teachers and everything', it would be wrong, a challenge of another extreme!"

Theme 4: Teaching as discrete from parenting

Having described a very definite line between her personal and professional identities, Eleanor found it easy to define the role of parent:

one that is active rather than passive, reminiscent of the 'bonsai tree' metaphor used by Maggie:

"That's quite easy, it's the capacity to change, it's to be flexible (pause), because it changes, as childhood develops, your role as a parent changes. And grows, and grows, and the tree gets bigger and bigger and adds more branches and lots of leaves and all little leaves on the end and you know?"

Eleanor also described a parenting role discrete from that of teacher. In keeping with other participants, this is distinguished by unconditional love and acceptance:

"I think to love that child regardless, totally. To be in a position, you'd hope that you're in a position where you'd say 'I will do anything, absolutely anything to make sure that that child's OK. Hopefully you could say that you unconditionally love your child. That it's there. And if it isn't there is a problem, there's a broken link in the chain somewhere, but hopefully that there is an unconditional love for that child and you may absolutely detest what that child has done but...(pause). That's where it stops. It's a very, you know, it kind of goes up to the edge."

A degree of role ambiguity emerged, however, when Eleanor began to describe her perception of the role played by teachers in the parent-teacher working relationship.

Theme 5: Role ambiguity: the 'bridge'.

Whilst many teachers are parents, only a small minority of parents are teachers, thus affording them only a parents' perspective. From the following 'bridge' metaphor, when analysed carefully, it becomes apparent that Eleanor describes a role for herself as teacher, parent *and* bridge:

"But my line towards parents is probably a lot further along than many are, because I like to think 'Oh, I'm really professional'. It doesn't mean I'm unfriendly, and it doesn't mean that I'm not going to listen to you (pause), but always in the back of the mind I will have this kind of – I'm like the bridge I suppose. You've got teacher, big gap, parent: and then you have got this kind of bridge with a meeting point maybe in the middle somewhere. The big gap is the line that I won't cross, as a parent myself...A gap, with a little bridge going across it."

When pressed a little further about the nature of this gap, Eleanor continued:

"Yeah, there is. I think the gap is different. The bridge is smaller for some people than it is bigger for others and I think I put that gap there myself, to protect myself as much as to protect the child. And there's that kind of 'Oh, I'm in a position of responsibility, I'll build my first step on the bridge'. But you can't be unfriendly 'Oh, maybe I'll take a chunk out then?' And I think as you become a parent you think 'Oh, there's things I would do as a parent that I wouldn't do as a teacher. And it does, the gap generally is bigger if

you are a parent yourself because you have the capacity to step back and think 'Hmm'..."

The teachers' role becomes even more ambiguous when parents are perceived as, for whatever reason, unable to perform their function correctly:

"Because, when mum and dad didn't have emotional capacities to deal with things and didn't have the resources available to them, I've had to act on parents' behalf, when the parents don't possess either the willingness or the understanding to be able to move forwards with something. Lots of different situations where the parents simply just don't know what to do next..."

Theme 6: Power in the working relationship

There is ample evidence from the transcript that Eleanor places great importance in the working relationship between parent and teacher. In addition, she displays a strong *personal* investment in this relationship, over and above that perceived as expected by the school. From Eleanor's interview, however, I believe that she sees the balance of power as residing very firmly with the school and the teacher.

As stated, Eleanor's decision to collaborate closely with parents is perceived as a personal one, beyond that of some other teachers.

Discussing her opinion of the school's review day, she offered the following:

"Different teachers are different. Some teachers don't feel the need to have that relationship and I'm sure that some teachers think 'Well that's parents,

I'm a teacher. That's home, that's for parents and I've seen them twice and that's OK.' I'm not about to say 'Oh no, that's wrong' because that works for some people. It just works for me that I have a good working relationship with the parents because I think they're essential to how their child can access the school. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't... And it's also the opportunity (pause), because I've obviously built up this over the years, it's fantastically powerful (pause), I like to keep in touch with parents as much as possible. So I have that relationship with the parents and the kids that I have because I like them to be involved.

Eleanor also sees the value of personal contact and the need for teachers and parents to 'share history':

"I say 'Look, can we meet face to face and talk about this?' Because I think eye to eye contact is massively important (pause), you have to share history with these people as well. And you can try and make connections with people. We are trying to find similarities with each other in order to be able to have a common ground for conversations sometimes and you'll say 'Right, OK I know it's been difficult, I'm a parent myself. I know I had to try this'. I think you have to find a common ground, because, we're people at the end of the day and I think that's the most difficult thing for 'parents' to understand. Is that we're people (pause), and if they can even see a little tiny bit of person in you, well you're kind of onto a winner..."

Despite this strive for equanimity however, Eleanor's responses demonstrate where the balance of power lies in the parent-teacher relationship. As such, the time and place are dictated by the school:

"Ordinarily, on a normal (pause), I would probably see parents (pause), twice a year on review day; I would expect to see parents twice a year, once in November, once in March, for half an hour."

And later:

"So if I think I'd like to bring a parent in and have a chat with them, I get the parent in."

In addition, and in keeping with the other teachers in the study, Eleanor describes the parents' role as one of *support* for the teacher:

"I don't barter: I can call up that parent and say 'Do you know what, your child hasn't been brilliant today. So anything you feel you can support me with at home?'"

Perhaps Eleanor's views regarding this theme are summed up best by her concluding comment on the subject:

"But – yes, collaborating with parents, hugely important. Whether they want to collaborate or not, they will be collaborated with!"

4.3.4 A summary of teachers' views

As with the summary of the parents' views described earlier, in this section, I offer a picture which I feel is representative of the teachers' views as a whole, rather than presenting it as a homogenous 'group view'.



(Figure 4.9: Summary of teachers' views)

Theme 1. Investment of self in role

"And he just shouted at me down the phone about how I was ignoring his daughter and not helping her. And that's why I'm here. I feel so strongly about wanting to be here and helping these children."

It becomes abundantly clear from the teachers' interviews that they have a huge personal investment in their role as teacher, with each seeming totally dedicated to their own practice and their students. When asked why they

became teachers, all three referred directly to their childhood experiences and an intrinsic desire to help others. They also bring their own, individual touches to their work; from awarding 'smilies' and lollipops and laminating certificates to spending at least two minutes each day talking to each of their students. This personal investment also extends to their interactions with parents, for whom they are all prepared to go 'the extra mile'. For Maggie and Penny, their identity as 'teacher' is very much a part of their identity as a person. For Eleanor, although she perceives her personal and professional selves as separate entities, her practice seems entirely influenced by her beliefs and qualities as a person. In short, the overwhelming sense I got from meeting them was their love for teaching, summed up by the phrase (above) *"that's why I'm here"*.

Theme 2. Confidence and capacity; intellectual and emotional

"I sort out problems. With parents, I think you have to be able to offer solutions, you have to be able to look at the problems that they've got at home; you have to be able to work to support them".

Another major feature of the teachers' interviews was their confidence in their own abilities and practice and their intellectual and emotional capacity to extend the hand of support to others. Both may stem from their experiences of success, firstly throughout their education and subsequently in the world of work. As previously described, early perceptions of teachers as 'caring', 'amazing', 'magic' and 'inspirational' were instrumental in influencing their choice of profession, and may underpin the extent to which

they value their own roles now. From this confidence, I believe they derive the strength to reach out to parents and students, acting as a container for their emotions and offering practical support and solutions. Along with the confidence and capacity, however, the teachers in this study also demonstrated the *willingness and desire* to offer support, seeing it as far more than merely their job to do so. In contrast to the experience of parents in this study, the perception of confidence and capacity described equip the teachers with a sense of self efficacy in effecting positive outcomes for students and parents alike.

Theme 3. Parents' role: support and challenge

"A lot of parents can be passive and they just, kind of, to them it is 'look after it like it's a dolly, keep it safe, make sure nothing touches it, make sure it gets fed, make sure it goes to sleep', but they don't give them life skills"

Perhaps as an unconscious reaction to parents' apparent preoccupation with safety and protection, teachers describe an active role for parents in both supporting and challenging their children. In doing so, a degree of frustration was expressed at their tendency to see the danger and potential pitfalls in any given situation rather than the opportunities afforded by it. When contrasted with the parents' theme of 'children under siege,' this view represents a major difference in perspective for the two groups and is therefore worthy of consideration regarding their working relationship and improved outcomes for children.

Theme 4. Role ambiguity

“So parenting is that (pause) but it’s also being quite active and, erm, (slight pause), educating (laughs). The two go together don’t they? (laughs). So loving and caring. And then supportive. Erm, I can’t think of the word for it, erm, (pause), what’s the word I’m looking for? Like a teacher, I suppose!”

Whilst all three teachers were able to articulate an important role for parenting (see theme 3, above), beyond that there appeared to be a great deal of role ambiguity and contradiction within each account. As such, each describes a role for parents which includes active participation in their child’s education, and a teachers’ role which extends far beyond the traditional ‘three Rs’. The fact that all the participants in this study struggled to find meaningful differences between the roles of parent and teacher (other than unconditional love and acceptance, as described previously) points not only to the potential for confusion but also suggests substantial areas of common ground, where both groups have the interests of the child at the centre of their focus.

Theme 5: Parental voice: communication versus tension

“You are saying ‘this is what I would like to happen’. They won’t allow it to happen. They won’t allow their child to be in detention, they won’t allow the child to go on report, because, what can you do then?”

All three teachers described a wish for increased communication between themselves and parents. This is seen as beneficial in many areas,

including increased understanding and reduced potential for misunderstandings and misconceptions. All profess a preference for 'eye to eye, face to face' communication with parents, as this is seen as most effective in forming a watertight relationship; one in which children cannot 'wiggle through the cracks'. Along with increased understanding, however, comes the potential for conflict and tension created by each group venturing into the territory traditionally reserved for the other. An increased voice for parents may be acceptable as long as it coincides with the values, rules and ethos of the school and individual teacher. Where this is not the case, tension may occur.

Theme 6: Power lies with the school

"I don't barter: I can call up that parent and say 'Do you know what, your child hasn't been brilliant today. So anything you feel you can support me with at home?' But – yes, collaborating with parents, hugely important. Whether they want to collaborate or not, they will be collaborated with!"

Following on from the theme of parental voice versus tension, in teachers' eyes the balance of power remains firmly with the school and individual teacher. This is never stated overtly by any teacher, yet I believe it reveals itself tacitly through their responses and contrasts sharply with the perceptions of parents in this study. Clues to this tacit dominance in the parent-teacher working relationship are shown in the descriptions of the circumstances in which they normally meet '*I would expect to see parents twice a year, once in November, once in March, for half an hour*', and in

terms of the nature of the subsequent interactions, in which parents are expected to *'be supportive of the decisions you make, and back them up at home'*.

From an analysis of the transcript of each teacher, looking at the roles and responsibilities they attributed throughout the interviews, the following diagram was produced for teachers as a group:

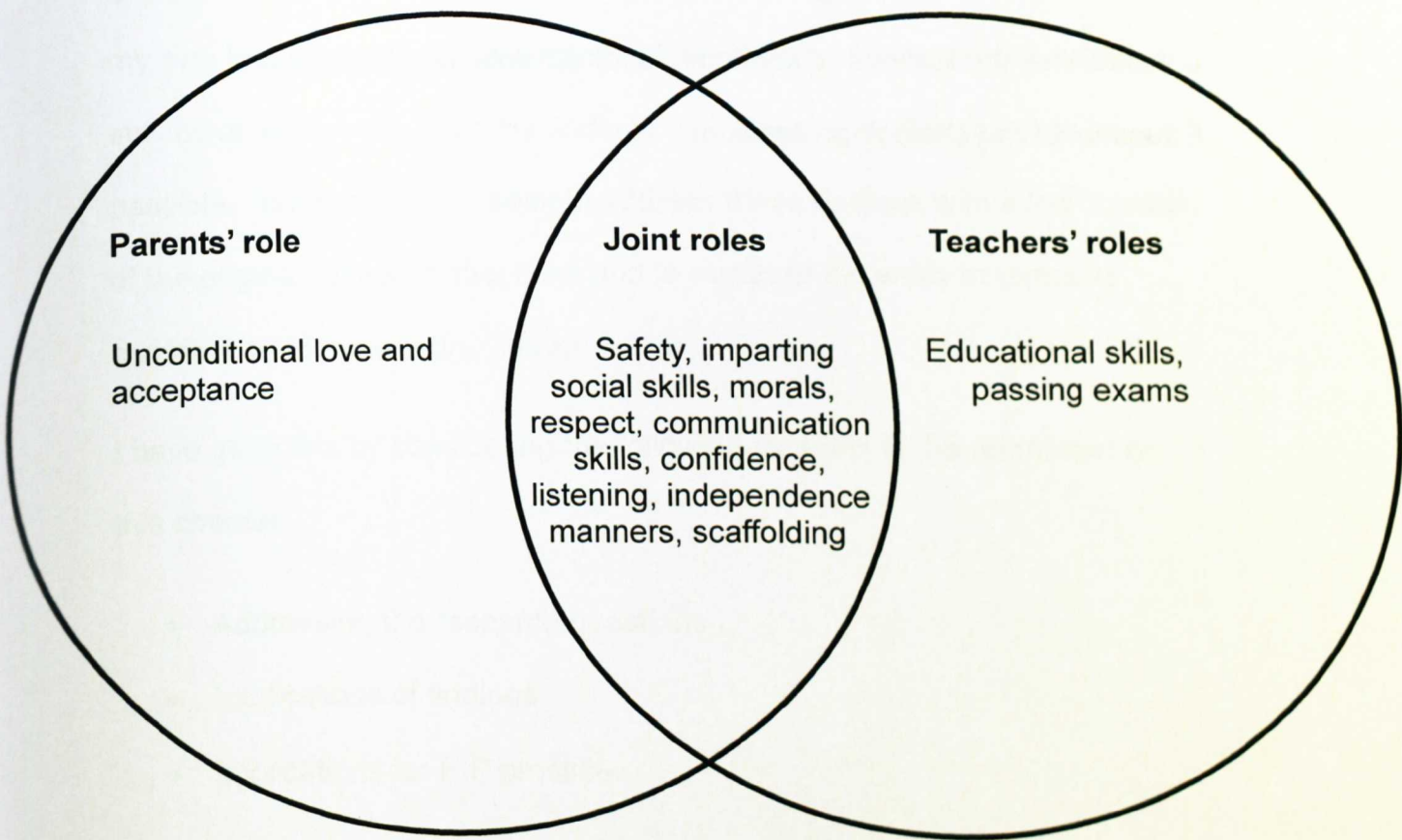


Figure 4.10: Diagram to depict teachers' views of respective roles

It can be seen from figure 4.12 (above), that only two areas are seen by teachers as belonging solely to one group; unconditional love and acceptance for parents, and educational skills/passing exams for teachers.

All other roles have, by one or more teacher, been ascribed to both teachers and parents.

4.4 Concluding comments

In this chapter I have presented and discussed the findings from each participant and from each group as a whole. In the following chapter, I will consider how these findings relate to the original research questions and consider the implications of my findings for schools, families and the Educational Psychology profession.

5 Discussion of findings

5.1 Introduction

This study has sought to explore parents' and teachers' perceptions of their own, and each others' roles in relation to the education and all-round development of children. Adopting IPA as my methodology, and using focus groups and in-depth semi-structured interviews as methods, I have brought my own interpretation to the analysis of the participants' accounts, whilst striving at all times to keep my findings as closely related to the data as possible. In this chapter, I seek to address these findings within the context of the original research questions and to evaluate the study in terms its contribution to the existing literature.

I have done this by considering the following sections in the remainder of this chapter:

- Addressing the research questions
- Implications of findings
- Implications for E.P practice

5.2 Addressing the research questions

In order to draw together the data presented in the previous chapter, I now address each of the substantive research questions in turn. As it is not possible to generalise from the findings of a (necessarily) small group of teachers and parents from a single school, each of the references to 'teachers' or 'parents' or 'schools' below should be taken as alluding to the

participants in this study only. I shall address each question individually before moving on to a consideration of their implications.

5.2.1 Research question 1:

What perceptions do parents have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?

As became apparent from the parents' interviews, and as depicted in figure 4.5 (and reproduced below), parents perceive an all encompassing role in relation to both the traditional education and all-round development of their own children. In addition to 'carrying on a child's education' at home and helping with homework, Stella added:

"...So I don't think a parent is just a parent. They're all sorts aren't they? They're counsellors, they're teachers, they're doctors, nurses, whatever."

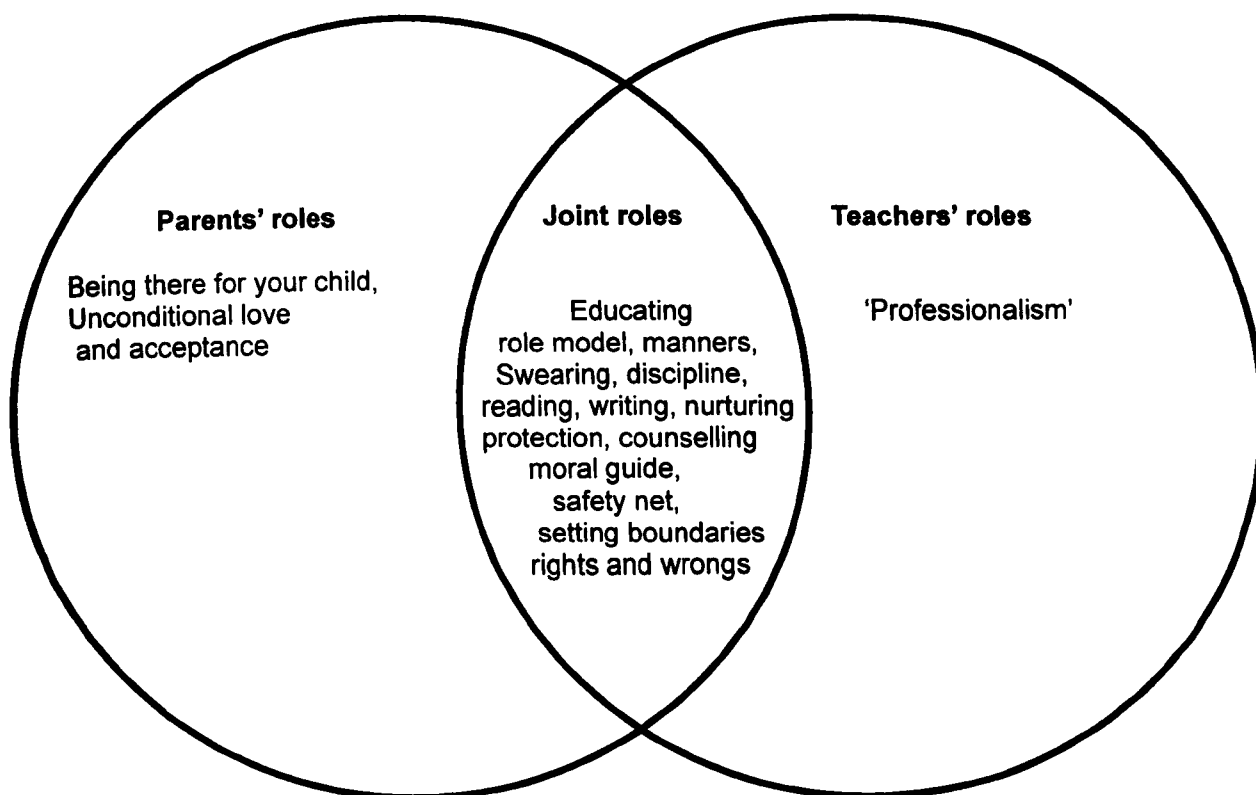


Figure 4.5: Diagram to depict parents' views of respective roles

As discussed in chapter 2 (see figure 2.1, reproduced below), Katz (1984), sought to identify the distinctions between the orientations of mothers and teachers towards children, asserting that the distinctions become greater and sharper with the increasing age of the pupil. With reference to the 'seven dimensions' on which parents and teachers may be diametrically opposed, the findings of this study support the first and most fundamental; that of scope of function. For these parents, this indeed appears 'diffuse and limitless', with every role and attribute traditionally associated with parenting *and* teaching included within the parents remit. As such, they see only the abstract notion of 'professionalism' referred to by Stella as unique to teachers and outside of the scope of their parental responsibilities. My

interpretation of this reference to 'professionalism' is one, perhaps, of a proper and professional detachment between teachers and children; one which as parents they would be unlikely to share.

Role dimension	Mothering (Parenting)	Teaching
Scope of function	Diffuse and limitless	Specific and limited
Intensity of affect	High	Low
Attachment	Optimum attachment	Optimum detachment
Rationality	Optimum irrationality	Optimum rationality
Spontaneity	Optimum spontaneity	Optimum intentionality
Partiality	Partial	Impartial
Scope of responsibility	Individual	Whole group

Figure 2.1 Distinctions between parenting and teaching in their central tendencies on seven role dimensions (Katz, 1984 p.15)

As stated, and in contrast to the findings of The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED, 2005), each of the parents were keen to assert their role and responsibility in the academic education of their

children, perceiving this as very much within their remit. Steve described his role in terms of educating about the world and the environment, seeing education in a holistic sense. Stella saw herself as a 'teacher' as a core element of her parenting role, stating that she handed over **no** responsibilities to the school in this regard. Jess summed her role up thus:

"I teach. I'm a parent. I teach my children. I taught my children how to speak, I taught them how to write, I taught them how to count. I taught my little one how to speak Spanish. I taught them how to take things apart...that's my job..."

These findings concur with those of Peters et al (2007) whose study for the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) found that parents were increasingly likely to see a child's education as mainly or wholly their responsibility rather than that of the school or teacher.

As described previously, parents see their main role as one of unconditional love, acceptance and 'being there' for their children. In addition however, and perhaps in reaction to their perception of their children as under threat from many areas of society, they perceive a heightened role in keeping them safe, over and above any aspirations they may have for them in terms of academic achievement or social status. It may be that this perception of their children as vulnerable also contributes towards parents' natural and overriding concern for their *own* child above that of the class or wider school community. The findings resonate with those of Munn (1993), who

asserted that parents are generally concerned only with the wellbeing of their own child, rather than the wider interests of the school.

The effect of external, societal influences also contributes to a sense of relative impotence in effecting positive outcomes for their children, with the locus of control often seen as lying elsewhere in the form of their peers, governments and a wider and faceless '*society*'. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) argued that a sense of self efficacy is one of the three fundamental factors underlying parents' decisions to become involved in their child's education. It seems likely that this perception of a lack of control may impact negatively on their sense of efficacy and therefore on the extent and nature of their interactions with the school and individual teachers.

Parents seem to be aware of their increased influence in terms of 'parental voice', with each perceiving their role as one of collaborating with, and if needs be, challenging teachers and other professionals when they deem it necessary. It seems, however, that parents detect a sense of resentment from individual teachers when they attempt to exercise this voice, and acknowledge the potential for tension which this may create. Cassanova (1996) identified that the potential for a clash between the interests of parents and teachers exists, especially where the extension of parental voice may serve to undermine the authority of teachers. Here, there seems to be a natural or inherent tension between parents' espoused wish for teachers to have more authority and autonomy within the school, and their increased assertion of their parental voice.

5.2.2 Research question 2

What perceptions do parents have of the teachers' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?

Parents, it seems, have very high expectations of teachers and the role played by them.

Jess, for example, in a single snapshot of dialogue cited manners, social awareness and standards, the difference between right and wrong and dissuading children from violence as within the teachers' remit, along with being a mentor, a role model and someone who can excite and inspire children in an otherwise 'mundane' world. She went on to add that teachers should 'help' children with their problems, work with their parents, feedback positive achievements, maintain sufficient order within the class to enable the teaching of the '3Rs' and act as a safety net for children who experience poor parenting.

Jess summed up her perception of the teachers' role thus:

"As a teacher, I believe when you're trained to be a teacher, you're also trained to look at the whole package. The whole of the child, not just the one, the whole..."

As alluded to in addressing the previous question, parents perceive a need for teachers to be given much more authority and power over children in terms of their role of enforcing discipline within the school, indeed each parent said that they 'felt sorry' for teachers in this respect with Steve concluding:

"But they can't, they can't even discipline a child...but it's not their fault is it? Because they're not allowed to do anything!"

All of the parents described a key role for teachers in communicating openly, honestly and fairly with them. Ongoing, two-way communication is not seen as optional for teachers or down to their personal choice, rather it is seen as a parental right; one which parents feel willing and able to demand. On a practical note, this communication should, in addition to the features identified above, be early and pre-emptive in the case of challenging behaviour, frequent in terms of positive feedback, and available to parents through a single, consistent and recognisable point of contact within the school. As stated in chapter four, Steve summed the parents' views up succinctly thus:

"You've got to deal with parents haven't you!"

As became apparent throughout the parents' interviews, children are perceived as vulnerable in many ways, including within the school environment. Accordingly, parents see a primary role for teachers as one of protector, counsellor, social worker and safety net, often above that of 'educator' in its strictest sense:

“They’re that net to protect the children that need that extra help, yeah, to me it’s the last form of defence”.

5.2.3 Research question 3

What perceptions do teachers have of their own role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?

From the analysis of the data, teachers clearly see themselves as playing a key role not only in the academic education of children but also in their wider social and emotional development.

As may have been expected, teachers described a key role for themselves in the traditional areas of reading, writing, arithmetic, subject specific disciplines, research and passing exams, as well as maintaining their classroom environment as a place of safety, security and continuity for children. Perhaps less predictably, however, teachers also perceive a central role in imparting social, communication and listening skills, morals, manners, independence, self confidence, and respect. In a description remarkably similar to that of parent, Jess in 5.2.1 (above), Penny described the teachers’ role thus:

*“To move a person on, move the person on personally, interest wise, erm, (brief pause), confidence wise. **It’s the whole package of the person.**”*

Included within this is a perception that their role includes communicating and collaborating closely with parents in order to establish an effective working relationship. Whilst perceiving the need to work closely with parents, however, it seems that the teachers' role in this relationship is one of a uni-directional imparting of information and demands for support.

Teachers, in direct contradiction to the expressed views of parents, assume *full* responsibility for children's academic progress within the school, neither openly seeking nor perceiving the need for active involvement from parents in this regard. This is a finding which I discuss further in addressing the final question.

5.2.4 Research question 4

What perceptions do teachers have of the parents' role in relation to the education and all-round development of children?

Surprisingly, for me, none of the teachers articulated the '*parental role*', '*parenting*' or '*parental attributes*' in terms of a child's **academic** education, instead describing more behavioural and social functions such as, imparting manners, respect and morals setting and maintaining firm boundaries, and acting as a positive role model (all of which they also see as elements of their own role). In terms of involvement in the child's school life, the only

practical role perceived for parents is one of *support* for the school and teacher regarding their actions and sanctions. This suggests that teachers may not have absorbed the findings of Harris and Goodall (2007) which state that parental engagement makes a significant difference to the **educational outcomes** of young people and that parents play a key role in raising **educational standards**.

Had I posed this question *directly* I wonder whether I would have got a different, perhaps socially mediated response which would have included a more active, participatory role for parents in their children's education?

The teachers were, however, very clear that parents had one fundamental *and unique* role in respect of their own children; that of enduring unconditional love and acceptance, irrespective of that child's actions. They also see parents as having the primary role in safeguarding their children.

Alongside this safeguarding role, and perhaps assuming equal importance, is one of 'active parenting'; allowing the child to blossom and grow and described by Penny as 'knowing how to let them go'. During member checking, Maggie used expressive hand gestures when contrasting parents' preoccupation with the need to "wrap and protect" their child, against her perceived imperative to encourage and enable them to "flourish and spread" (whilst miming the action of a growing tree).

I have reproduced the diagram depicting the views of teachers (figure 4.10) below.

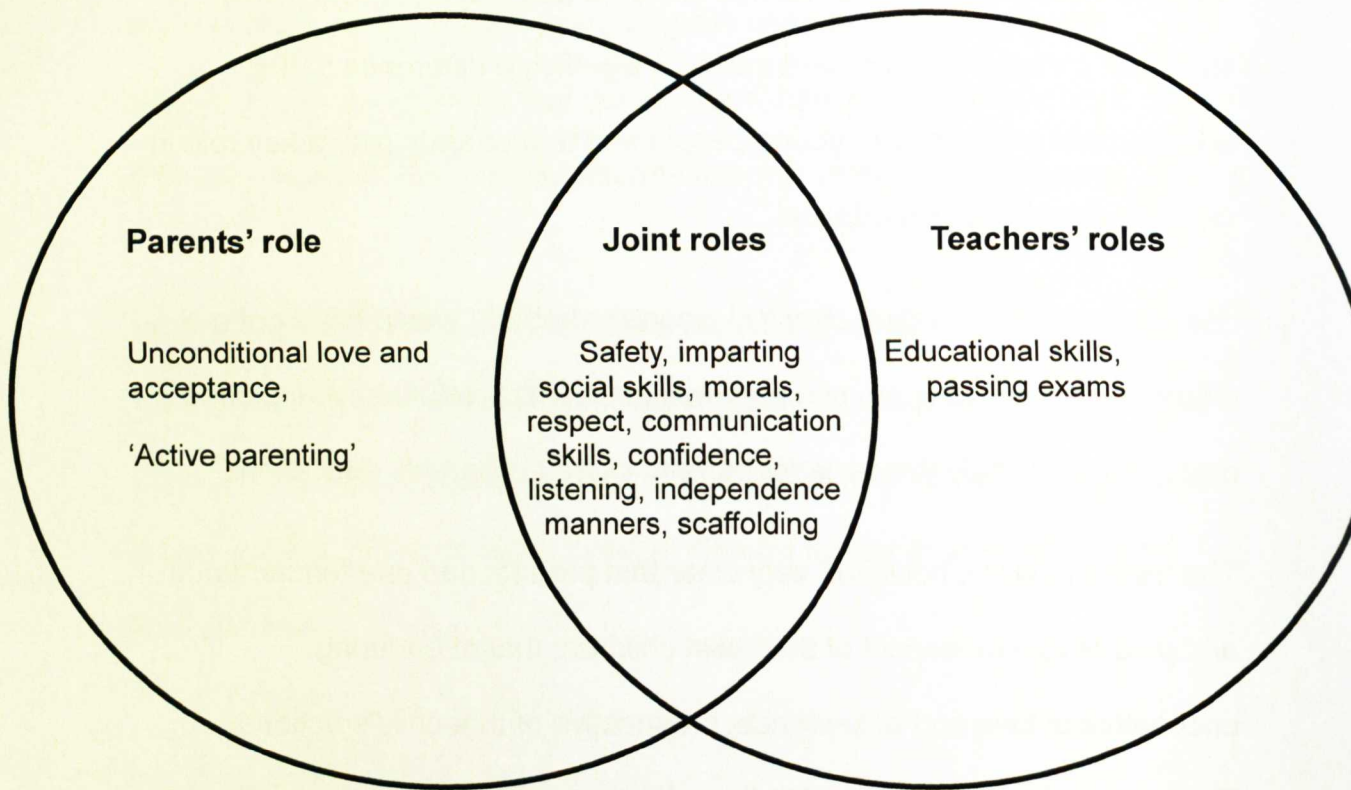


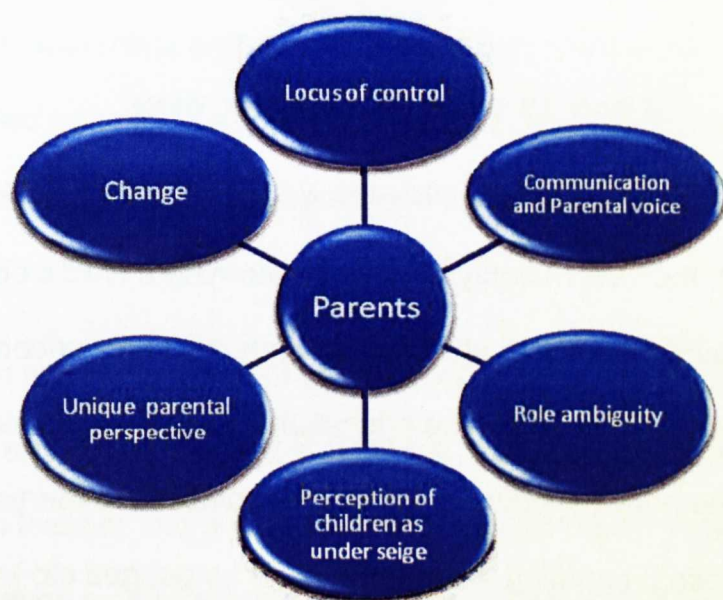
Figure 4.10: Diagram to depict teachers' views of respective roles

5.3 Implications of the findings

In discussing the potential implications of these findings, I shall now address the subsidiary questions as stated:

- 1. Are there areas of commonality and divergence in perceptions which emerge from the findings?*
- 2. If so, how can an understanding of these issues be addressed to enhance the working relationship between parents and teachers and improve outcomes for children and families?*

It can be seen from the findings for parents and teachers, that there are important areas of similarity and difference between the perceptions of the two groups (see figures 4.4 and 4.9, reproduced below). As these areas naturally lend themselves to a discussion of the implications, I shall address both questions together.



(Figure 4.4 Summary of parents' views)

child's education, one of which they describe as 'invitations and demands for involvement' from the school. Whilst this study reflects only the views offered by the parents and teachers taking part, the picture which emerged suggests at least that schools may benefit from an attempt to make these 'invitations and demands' more overt. Their success however, in terms of meaningful engagement with parents, will depend on this will being genuinely reflected and manifest in the views of teachers.

It appears from these findings that the **cultural shift** in the way in which schools, local authorities and other professionals work with parents and children, called for in the Lamb Report (2010, Lamb Inquiry Report, Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence) may not yet have fully occurred.

A key area in which the views of parents and teachers seem to reflect each other is role ambiguity. As Keyes, (2002, p. 182), asserts that 'confusion results when teacher and parent roles become ambiguous', this finding attains relevance and suggests the potential for further conflict as parental voice and influence continue to grow. A degree of natural tension seems inevitable when parents' views of an all encompassing role for teachers as educators, mentors, protectors and social workers, along with a desire to see teacher's power to discipline restored are juxtaposed with their assertion that *they* know their child best and their preparedness to '*fight their child's right*' against the wishes of the teacher as and when they deem it necessary.



(Figure 4.9: Summary of teachers' views)

As can be seen from the diagrams depicting the views of teachers and parents (above), the vast majority of roles concerning a child's education and all round development are attributed to both, with only unconditional love attributed solely to parents and educational skills/passing exams to teachers. For the parents, however, even this domain of expertise (in the form reading, writing, counting, teaching foreign languages etc) was claimed by themselves, leaving only the even more abstract notion of 'professionalism' to the teachers. Teachers, for their part, see the traditional academic element of a child's education as being almost exclusively their role, and at no time articulated a wish for parents to become involved or spoke of actively seeking their participation in this area.

As stated previously, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) identified three main factors which underlie parents' decisions to become involved in their

child's education, one of which they describe as 'invitations and demands for involvement' from the school. Whilst this study reflects only the views offered by the parents and teachers taking part, the picture which emerged suggests at least that schools may benefit from an attempt to make these 'invitations and demands' more overt. Their success however, in terms of meaningful engagement with parents, will depend on this will being genuinely reflected and manifest in the views of teachers.

It appears from these findings that the ***cultural shift*** in the way in which schools, local authorities and other professionals work with parents and children, called for in the Lamb Report (2010, Lamb Inquiry Report, Special Educational Needs and Parental Confidence) may not yet have fully occurred.

A key area in which the views of parents and teachers seem to reflect each other is role ambiguity. As Keyes, (2002, p. 182), asserts that 'confusion results when teacher and parent roles become ambiguous', this finding attains relevance and suggests the potential for further conflict as parental voice and influence continue to grow. A degree of natural tension seems inevitable when parents' views of an all encompassing role for teachers as educators, mentors, protectors and social workers, along with a desire to see teacher's power to discipline restored are juxtaposed with their assertion that *they* know their child best and their preparedness to '*fight their child's right*' against the wishes of the teacher as and when they deem it necessary.

Both also see improved communication as vital in promoting enhanced understanding and trust and in presenting a 'united front' in order to promote positive outcomes for children, although, again each also reported the potential for conflict which this may bring. The parents, for example, frequently asserted that they know their own child best, whilst anticipating and often resenting a dissenting opinion from a teacher. For their part, the teachers valued the potential for increased support for their methods and sanctions gained through enhanced communication, but also talked of their frustration and anger when they felt their authority was being undermined by the actions and decisions of individual parents.

Given the wish and expectation of parents for an open, equal and personal dialogue with teachers, the means to which this may be achieved should be of interest to the school, and one which they may seek to address in the interests of positive outcomes for all parties.

Perhaps increased 'face to face, eye to eye' communication would also help parents and teachers to understand the others' perspective in additional areas in which divergence is apparent.

Parents, it seems, perceive a world of threat to their children who are under siege from all angles, frequently citing school and teachers as the 'last line of defence'. When I presented my findings to colleagues in the EP service (almost all of whom are ex teachers), their immediate and surprised response was "defence against what?" It seems that their lived experience (including that of education) is one largely of success and attainment,

perhaps causing them to perceive a world of innate opportunity rather than potential danger. In line with this, the teachers' theme of confidence and capacity was, I believe, at least partly borne out of their experiences of the opportunities afforded to them by their education, and an innate belief that these opportunities may potentially be available to all, irrespective of background or socio economic status. This idea that children's aspirations and development can be moulded and shaped - akin to the bonsai tree metaphor used by Maggie – underpins their conviction that children should be challenged as well as merely supported and protected in order to maximise their potential in every sphere of life.

Another area in which the experiences (and, perhaps, realities) of the participants differ is in relation to the balance and exercise of power within the parent-teacher dyad. Long standing tradition, as well as the potentially contrasting experiences of education, as described above seemingly leave teachers occupying the territorial 'home ground' of school, and able to dictate the circumstances in which they and parents meet. This was evident from the testimonies of teachers, for example Eleanor; *"They will be collaborated with"*, and of parents, for example; *"She wants it that way, she'll have what she wants... Yes, she can do what she wants"*.

Coupled with an enduring and commonly expressed perception that a parents' role is one of support for the school and its sanctions, teachers may feel that the balance of power in the relationship lies with them.

The main contrast, however, which I have drawn from my series of meetings with the participants, is a sense of efficacy, agency and *certainty* for teachers, as opposed to *uncertainty* and relative impotence for parents. For teachers, this certainty is characterised by their confidence and capacity to support and adapt, the strength they draw from their professional status and their position of inherent power within the parent teacher relationship. For parents, a sense of relative *uncertainty* is characterised by their perceived lack of efficacy or control over events in the face of downward change and a decline in the morals and standards of society, which in turn feeds their perception of children's vulnerability and contributes towards their unique parental perspective of 'children under siege'. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2008) concluded, amongst other things, that the aspirations of parents for their children not only effect their decisions to become involved, but are also a predictor of their subsequent academic attainment. This, it appears, is a finding readily apparent to teachers but less so for parents and therefore another area which would benefit from highlighting further and addressing.

In keeping with the perception of change and an overall lack of efficacy or control over events recounted by each of the participants, (particularly by Stella as described in section 4.2.3), is the notion of children experiencing a lack of effective boundaries and the sense of security they provide. In my analysis, I suggested that the perceived power shift from adults to children may have afforded them more freedom and relative impunity from sanctions, but that this may, in fact, represent somewhat of a poisoned

chalice, likening this scenario to that of William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', in which an absence of natural authority imposed from above leads to a break down in the norms of socially expected behaviour. With this in mind, it is possible to view the recent summer of civil unrest, and the media portrayal of a disconnected youth, seemingly removed from the constraints and expectations of mainstream society, as a product of this 'control vacuum' in which children feel both able and obliged to establish their own norms and boundaries. In these terms, it seems imperative that a sense of 'control' is re-established, necessitating the need for a shared understanding between parents and teachers as to where their respective responsibilities and authority lie. It may no longer be sufficient for each group to cede responsibility to the other, to a faceless 'authority' or, by default, to the children themselves.

In contrast, the overwhelming sense I got from my meetings with both parents and teachers was one of devotion to the children in their care. Although this manifested itself in different ways as previously described, the unconditional love of parents and the degree of personal investment shown by teachers combine to create an environment in which children are best equipped to flourish emotionally, socially and academically.

Whilst I could, perhaps, have anticipated the parents' obvious love for their children, the forcefulness of their testimonies did take me by surprise and fill me with encouragement in equal measure. The idea that these parents show total commitment to their children and are prepared to do *anything* for them flies in the face current popular opinion depicted by many aspects of

the media. Although they may perceive a certain lack of agency in effecting positive outcomes, the will and desire to do the best for their children is definitely evident and is a powerful resource which can and should be drawn upon. Parents want to be involved, see it as their job to be involved and greatly value the opportunities to become involved which come their way from the school. The extent and nature of parents' involvement, however, seems to be largely dependent on the extent and nature of the 'demands and invitations' from the school. In this regard, two things seem important: firstly, systemic issues such as the facilitation of meetings convenient to both parties and having a single point of contact with whom parents can build trust, familiarity and rapport. Secondly, and equally vital, are the manner, approach and interpersonal skills of individual teachers.

Whilst not surprised (though greatly encouraged) by the obvious love for their children demonstrated by the parents, I was taken aback by the degree of dedication and personal investment shown by the teachers in this study. For them, teaching is a true vocation. In contrast to some of the perceptions voiced by the parents, these teachers are totally committed to the children in their care, as evidenced by their accounts of thinking about them while at home, on holiday and even in their dreams! Each also sees parents as having a pivotal role in children's development and considers collaboration with parents as a core aspect of their role.

For any school seeking to create an environment in which parents and teachers are motivated to engage and in which children can flourish and develop, these findings are surely of fundamental interest and importance.

Despite the differences in perceptions described within the study, having two pools of resources in their parents and teachers, both truly committed to caring for, supporting and enhancing the lives of children, represents an opportunity which is too important to overlook or under utilise.

5.3.1 Implications for E.P. practice

As Educational Psychologists, our responsibility is to maintain the interests of the child as paramount and to place them firmly at the centre of our working practice. In doing so, it is easy to find ourselves occupying the space between parents and teachers, which can be problematic whilst at the same time placing us in an ideal position to affect positive change for both. Thus, the EP has an important role in 'bridging the gap' between parents and teachers, using our insights into the perceptions of each in order convey shared understandings and establish common ground between the two groups

As discussed in Chapter Two, a central aim of this research has been to add to the sum of understanding in relation to what Pelco and Ries (1999) describe as 'what school psychologists need to know'. As such, they describe a key role for Educational Psychologists in working with teachers and parents in order to enhance outcomes for children and families.

In terms of the former, an awareness and understanding of the findings of this study could inform the nature and content of systemic work with teachers in the form of In Service Training (INSET) around working with parents. In addition, an ability to articulate the views expressed by parents

to individual teachers, for example around their perception of children's vulnerability, should add to their awareness of the contexts and circumstances in which they interact.

In working with parents, similar benefits from an increased awareness and understanding apply. Again, this is apparent on the two levels of systemic and individual case work. From my experience of working with individual parents and the delivery of parenting programmes, I have detected a common and recurring theme of an absence of understanding of a teacher's role and motivations. With this comes a suspicion that teachers may have little or no interest in their individual children, instead concentrating on their own needs and those of the school. Whilst these wider needs are rightly of legitimate concern to teachers, it seems likely that a significant number will also show the degree of dedication to individual students apparent in this study and this is a genuine finding which needs to be communicated strongly to parents. Again, bridging the gap between the perceptions of parents and teachers in this way is a role for which the EP is both ideally placed and suited and should be of immediate relevance to the profession.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 Limitations of the study

In terms of the qualitative methodology used, the limitations inherent within IPA are also applicable in this study. These include the lack of validity, replicability and generalisability associated with quantitative methods, as discussed in Chapter Three. In addition, qualitative methods rely on the recording, analysis and interpretation of words as data and present many challenges to the researcher, including the labour intensiveness of data collection, transcription, and analysis. When considered in the light of my position of operating in '*lone-scholar, no-budget mode*', Dunleavy (2003, p.20), the size and scope of this study is necessarily constrained by these factors.

As such, an obvious limitation of this study is the number of participants used. Had time and other circumstances allowed, I would ideally have had more participants in each of the teacher and parent focus groups, in particular seeking more male participants (especially in the case of teachers) in order to gain an additional perspective on the issues.

In addition to increasing the number of participants, it would also have been interesting to have and followed up the initial semi-structured interviews with a second following the member checking sessions. This would have allowed the participants to reflect on their experience of our first meeting and discuss whether they may have thought or acted differently in their interactions since then.

In line with this thinking, I would also like to have undertaken a 'second phase' of analysis, in which the findings described here could have been reported back to each of the groups *jointly*, prompting further discussion, debate and increased understanding between the two groups. Analysis following this second phase could then have then allowed an evaluation of possible outcomes for parent-teacher/home-school relationships and for children and their families. In addition to the practical constraints described above, this course of action would also have posed ethical considerations as the two groups were not known to each other and this anonymity would have been compromised by such a meeting.

Another limitation of the present study is, in line with other such small scale studies, its lack of generalisability, described by Gibbs (2002, p.241) as:

'The ability to move from explanations and descriptions of particular examples to general populations'

As such, the findings from this study cannot be directly extended to other parents, teachers or schools, even those which may be considered to be of a similar nature.

Yardley (2007, p.238), however, points out the futility of carrying out research in which the findings from one study were so unique as to have 'no relevance to any other situation.' Instead, Yardley argues that researchers should aspire to a 'theoretical' generalisation, one in which the findings from one context would prove useful in another that had similarities. I feel that, though necessarily particular to the teachers and

parents who participated in this study, the findings should stand up to this process of 'theoretical generalisation' and be of interest to other schools and similar contexts.

A further potential limitation of IPA is that of subjectivity arising from the researcher's perspectives and values and the researcher's influence over the data. This raises the possibility that the findings reflect the stance of the researcher, rather than that of the participants. Bryman (2001), however, argues that subjectivity in narrative research should not be seen as a weakness, but instead the subjective interpretation of the researcher should be not only acknowledged, but made clear as an integral element of the finished study. Yardley (2007) asserts that, rather than attempting to eliminate the influence of the researcher, qualitative researchers should instead seek to maximise the benefits of an active engagement with the participants by allowing them to influence the topic and data. This was addressed in this study by using the findings from the focus groups, in which the participants were encouraged to talk freely around the general topic area, to inform the schedule of the semi-structured interviews and through the incorporation of data elicited from member checking sessions.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

As alluded to in section 6.1 (above), I believe further research, perhaps drawing upon the substance of the findings from this study, could be conducted with a joint working group comprised of parents and teachers.

As such, I propose to present the findings of this study (independently in the first instance to maintain anonymity) to the parent and teacher participants, drawing particular attention to the convergences and divergences apparent from their respective accounts. I would then offer to facilitate a joint meeting at which these themes could be discussed. Such an action research project could address positive and practical ways forward for the parent-teacher relationship within a school and be evaluated over time to establish its impact on outcomes for each group, and children. In addition, a study similar to my own, conducted with many more participants and involving a number of schools would be useful in addressing the concerns of lack of generalisability and also in comparing findings from schools in areas of different socio-economic status.

6.3 Significance of the findings

I believe that the findings of this study, though necessarily limited by the size and scale of the research, have significance in a number of areas and add to the body of knowledge in this field. By deliberately *not* posing the research questions directly, (thus avoiding as far as possible socially mediated or 'politically correct' responses) and through a careful process of interpretative phenomenological analysis, I have sought to present the participants' concerns as they emerged from the data.

As such, the findings reveal hugely dedicated teachers who appear to have fully embraced their wider, holistic role in the education and all round development of children. Despite this, progress still needs to be made in

terms of a cultural shift in the way parents are viewed by teachers as an active resource and involved in the life of the school.

For their part, parents are devoted to their children and not only perceive their role as one of active engagement in their education, but would also welcome opportunities to become more involved.

The findings also suggest that teachers' frustration at an apparent dearth of 'active parenting' may be accounted for by parents' preoccupation with safety and protection for their children and their perceived lack of efficacy in the face of wider cultural and societal influences.

All of the above findings present positive opportunities for the enhancement of the working relationship between parents and teachers and should be of relevance to parents, schools and the Educational Psychology profession.

6.4 Personal reflection and concluding comments

For me, this study has presented many challenges, both practical and intellectual, and represents a considerable journey of learning and self-awareness as a person and as a practising professional.

At times, I have been daunted by the scale of the task and my responsibility to the participants to represent their views accurately and fairly. I have, however, been hugely encouraged by the sentiments expressed in the study. Parents have displayed the unconditional love and enduring commitment which every child should enjoy. Teachers, for their part, have

shown a dedication above and beyond their professional responsibilities; for them, teaching truly is a vocation rather than a job.

Working with children at the centre of my focus affords me the privilege of meeting and collaborating with a large number of teachers and, parents.

Conducting this in-depth research has enabled me to explore the thoughts, experiences and motivations of the participants, and given me an insight into how each perceives the roles of themselves and each other.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1 Information sheet (Teachers)



Norah Fry Research Centre

Tel: 0117 331 0987

Web: www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry/



3 Priory Road
Bristol, BS8 1TX

Dear (teacher)

My name is Alan Ebbens; I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist currently on placement with Plymouth Psychology Service and studying for a Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of Bristol. As part of the research requirement for my dissertation, I am interested in finding out the degree to which parent and teacher perceptions regarding children's' education are similar, where they may differ and how the Educational Psychologist can best work with the two groups.

I would very much appreciate your help in this piece of research.

Before you decide whether to take part it is important that you understand what this research is about.

I propose to carry out in-depth research involving school staff and parents to elicit and gain a better understanding of

- a) Parents' perceptions of their own role and responsibilities in the all round **development*** of their children
- b) Parents' perceptions of the role and responsibilities of school/teachers in the above
- c) Teachers' perceptions of both their own, and (more generally) school's role and responsibilities in the all round development of children
- d) Teachers' perceptions of the role and responsibilities of parents in the above

***Development not just academically, but also holistically - the scope of this term will be determined by the range of opinions expressed.**

In order to get a better understanding of the issues which are important to parents and teachers, I would first like to hold separate focus groups of 4-6 people, and from these, a small number of participants (2-3) will be chosen for a more in-depth interview.

The interviews should take no longer than 45 minutes and will be arranged at a time and venue to suit you.

The focus groups and interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder but all the data will be anonymised and not made known or discussed with anyone else. No participants will be identified in the write-up of this research. You can withdraw at any time if you decide that you no longer wish to take part in the research. The information you share with us will be stored anonymously on a computer at the University of Bristol for 6 years according to the Data Protection Act and subsequently destroyed.

After the focus group, and after the interview, I will write about what I have found. You would be offered a chance at each stage to say whether you agree with my findings before the final report is completed and ask for any comments to be changed or withdrawn

The research findings will form the basis of my dissertation and the school will receive a summary report. You will also be given a summary copy. A copy of the full report will be available if requested. The research will be completed by September 2011.

If you would like to know more about the project:

☎ 01752 224962 or email: alan.ebbens@plymouth.gov.uk

If you have any concerns or would like to complain about any aspect of the project, please contact Anna Marriott at the Norah Fry Research Centre. The address, telephone number and email are at the top of this letter.

If you agree to take part in this research, please complete the enclosed consent form and return the slip in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Many Thanks,

Alan Ebbens

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Norah Fry Research Centre

3

Priory Road

Tel: 0117 331 0987
Web: www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry/



Bristol, BS8 1TX

Dear Parent/carers

My name is Alan and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the University of Bristol. I am doing a project with Plymouth Psychology Service to find out how parents and teachers feel about school. I hope that the information gained will help to improve understanding and outcomes for children.

I am writing to see if you could help me.

I would like to talk to groups of parents and teachers to find out what they think about children's education, and then to interview a few of them in more depth.

If you agree to take part in the research, this is what would happen:

- You would take part in a focus group with a few other parents to help me find out what things are important to you
- You could then be chosen for a 30-45 minute interview to find out a bit more about your views. The interview would be arranged at a time and place which suits you
- After the focus group, and after the interview, I will write about what I have found. You would be offered a chance at each stage to say whether you agree with my findings before the final report is completed and ask for any comments to be changed or withdrawn
- You can withdraw at any time without giving a reason if you decide that you no longer wish to take part

I will need to audio-record the focus group and interviews but you and the school will not be named and everything included in the report will be anonymous. The recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet at Plymouth Psychology Service and destroyed once the research has been written up.

The school will be given a full copy of the report when it is completed in September 2011 and you will be offered a summary or full copy at that time.

If you would like to know more about the project, please contact me on:

☎ 01752 224962 or email: alan.ebbens@plymouth.gov.uk

If you have any concerns or would like to complain about any part of the project, please contact the ethics representative, Anna Marriott at the Norah Fry Research Centre in Bristol. The address, telephone number and email are at the top of this letter.

If you agree to take part in this research, I would be grateful if you could complete the enclosed consent form and return the slip to me in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Many thanks,

Alan Ebbens

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 3

Norah Fry Research Centre

Tel: 0117 331 0987

Web: www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry/



3 Priory Road
Bristol, BS8 1TX

Parents and teachers; the EP role in facilitating a successful relationship

Consent form

Dear participant:

Please tick those boxes that you agree with:

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information ☐
- I agree to take part in a focus group. ☐
- And, potentially, a 45 minute interview, if randomly chosen. ☐
- I agree to the interview being audio-recorded ☐
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time ☐
- I agree to take part in the above study ☐
- I agree that if my name is removed, my data can be included in the final report ☐

Signed _____

Printed name _____ Date _____

Appendix 4a Prompts used for Teacher Focus Group (ECM) Every Child Matters Agenda

Be healthy

Physically healthy

Mentally and emotionally healthy

Sexually healthy

Healthy lifestyles

Choose not to take illegal drugs

Parents, carers and families promote healthy choices

Stay safe

Safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation

Safe from accidental injury and death

Safe from bullying and discrimination

Safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school

Have security, stability and are cared for

Parents, carers and families provide safe homes and stability

Enjoy and achieve

Ready for school

Attend and enjoy school

Achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school

Achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation

Achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school

Parents, carers and families support learning

Make a positive contribution

Engage in decision-making and support the community and environment

Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school

Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate

Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges

Develop enterprising behaviour

Parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour

Achieve economic well-being

Engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school

Ready for employment

Live in decent homes and sustainable communities

Access to transport and material goods

Live in households free from low income

Parents, carers and families are supported to be economically active

Appendix 4b Prompts used for Teacher Focus Group (Media Quotations)

- “Teachers are the key to social mobility... politicians should dwell on the single most important agent for doing well in life, the teacher”
The Guardian.co.uk 2009
- “How much of what they taught has remained in my head?...what stays with me as I get older are the ‘off-piste’ moments from teachers with a little time to be enthusiasts” The Guardian 2009
- “Do schools exist to impart a canon of knowledge or to teach children skills...are these two things mutually exclusive or should schools be doing a mixture of both?” RSA: What are Schools For? 2008
- “We believe that it would be a disservice to teachers not to highlight their central role in promoting good behaviour in schools” The Elton Report 1989
- “Ideally, children will be well socialised by the time they start school”
Daily Telegraph Blog 2008
- “Schools should enforce discipline, but it’s parents responsibility to teach their children manners before they are of school age. Of course, somebody will have to teach the parents manners too – but that’s another problem!” Daily Telegraph Blog 2008
- “Far from being places where people learn responsibility and civility, schools are too often anarchic...due to an overly liberal teaching establishment” Daily Telegraph 2008

Appendix 5: Prompts used for Parent Focus Group (Media Quotations)

- How children are parented has a more significant impact upon their future life chances than just about anything else (British think-tank Demos)
- My friend was told by the teacher that 75% of a child's learning takes place in the home. (Independent online)
- It is parents, not schools, that have the legal and moral responsibility to ensure their children are educated. Parents do not expect teachers to bring their children up, teach them good manners or act as social workers. (Independent blog 2010)
- In a context where the two roles – parent and teacher – are already becoming blurred, we make a clear distinction between the roles of parenting and teaching. In short, we need to let parents be parents and let teachers teach. (Times online)
- It is now assumed that engaging parents in their child's education is the way forward. But is it? (Parents forum, 2010)
- Teachers and parents: enemies or allies? (Times online blog 2010)
- *Standing up to Supernanny* by Jennie Bristow unflinchingly challenges the cult of 'parent-blaming', in which parents are held directly responsible for everything from youth crime to the crisis in education
- "My mum and dad brought me up with respect and taught me that you have to work. They drummed that ethic into me... "I think that's what's missing today. (Sunday Times Nov 2009)
- "Ideally, children will be well socialised by the time they start school" (Daily Telegraph Blog 2008)

Appendix 6 Semi-structured interview schedule for teachers

Area 1; Questions and prompts based around the role of teachers

- *Thinking back as far and as widely as you like; why do think you became a teacher?*
- *Attributes – what makes a good teacher – what makes you a good teacher – why did you become a teacher?*
- *'Educate' (verb), what does this mean – how wide ranging a term?*
- *Extent of role – 'Loco parentis', how comfortable are you with this, what does it mean to you?*

Area 2; Questions and prompts based around the role of parents

- *What is your overall experience of parents throughout your teaching career?*
- *'Good enough' parent – what is the minimum you would expect of a parent?*
- *Parents as role models – are they aware?*
- *'Parent' (verb), what does this mean/look like in practice?*

Area 3; Questions and prompts based around the experience of working together

- *What is your role in working with parents? How do you feel about this?*
- *To what extent is your role one of collaboration with parents?*
- *Ideally, how would you like it to be?*
- *When/why do you normally interact*
- *What are the potential challenges/potential areas of conflict? How do you deal with these?*
- *What do you feel about the level of support from parents?*

Appendix 7

Parents' Interview Schedule

PARENT SECTION

- Thinking back, what has been your proudest moment as a parent?
- What do you think makes a good parent?
- How do you see yourself as a parent
- What 'circumstances' can affect the sort of parent someone can be?
- Responsibilities of the role; where does your role as a parent begin and end?
- The teacher focus group raised the importance of behaviour (as a major bug-bear) e.g. manners and swearing. In terms of behaviour, to what extent do you hand over responsibility at the school gates?
- How welcomed – in terms of invitations etc - do you feel by your child's Secondary school? Is there an expectation that you get involved – if so, how does this make you feel?
- The verb, "to parent", what does this mean to you?

TEACHER SECTION

- The verb, "to educate", what does this mean to you, and is it different to "parent"?
- If a teacher were to (rightly and fairly in your opinion) discipline a child, do you think that they would/should be backed by the parent?
- In an ideal world, what attributes and qualities would a perfect teacher have?
- Do you think teachers have it easier or harder than in your day?
- Do you think children have it easier or harder than in your day?

COLLABORATION SECTION

- How, when and why do you interact with teachers?
- To what extent do you think teachers should be flexible and open to negotiation in their dealings with parents regarding their child?
- From your experience, what are or could be potential areas of conflict between teachers and parents?
- Do you see teachers as back-up for parents or parents as back-up for teachers?

Appendix 8

'Going Deeper' questions (adapted from Smith et al 2009 p.68)

HOW?

WHY?

TELL ME MORE

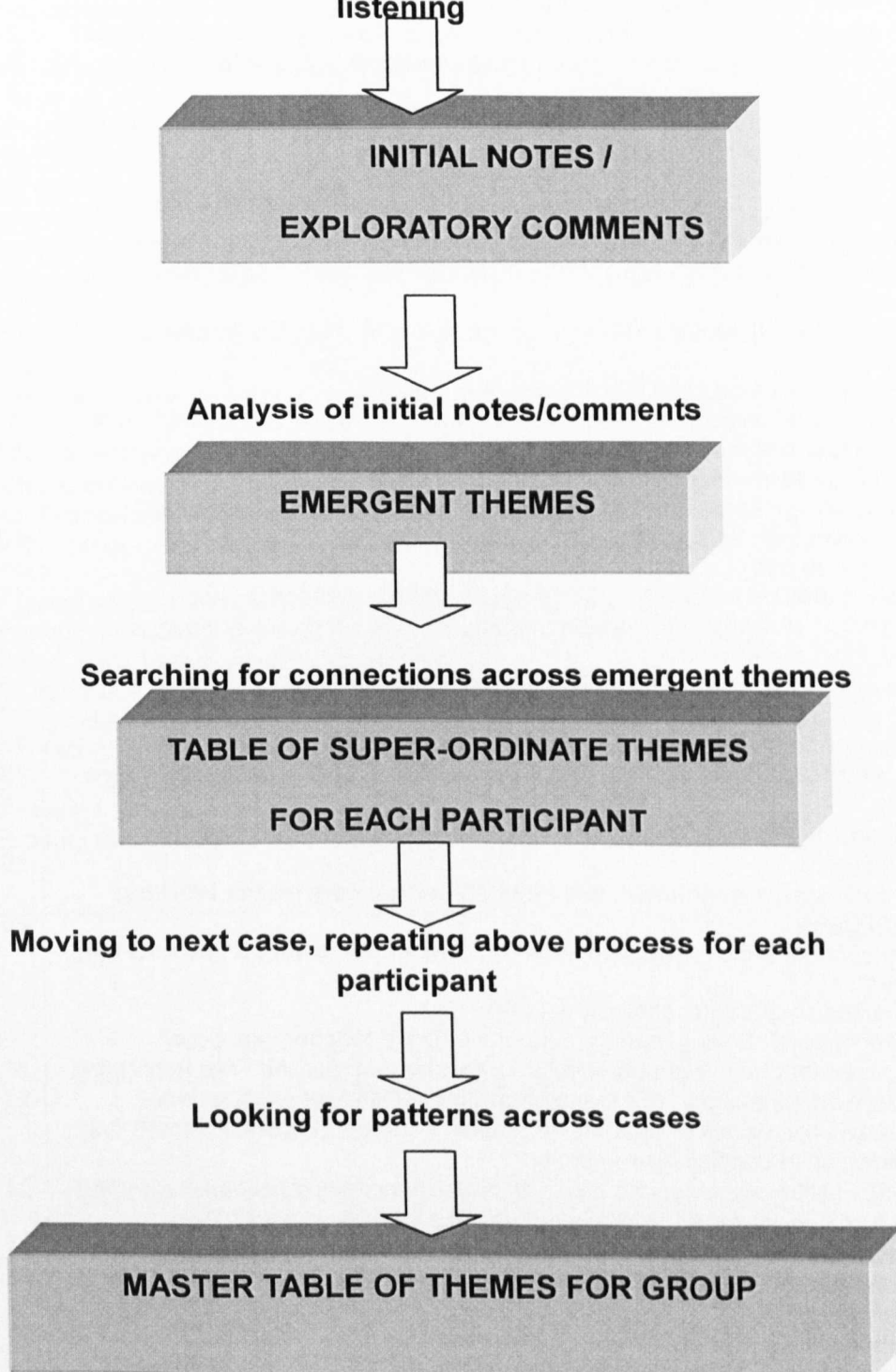
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING WHEN?

HOW WERE YOU FEELING WHEN?

Appendix 9

Flow of data analysis: adapted from Smith et al (2009)

Engagement with text through reading, re-reading, listening and re-listening



Appendix 10, Tables of themes

Teacher A 'Maggie' Initial list of themes	Page number
Early vocational calling	1
Experience of succeeding at school	2
Own negative experiences of childhood – neglected - trying to compensate?	2,3,5
Cyclical nature of parenting – own need to be better..., break the cycle	3,4
Love of children comes through	3
Inner strength/capacity to overcome adversity; where does this come from?	4
Enduring effect of childhood memories/experiences	4
Own reflection, "maybe it was to make up for my mum..."	4
Positive experience of education, A levels, university, OPPORTUNITY	6
Language re perfect teacher – obvious love of subject/learning: "inspire, fascination, love, curiosity, thirst for knowledge (contrast to experience of many parents?)	6,13
Source of confidence/capacity?? "science is one of those things people can't argue with"	6
Positive attributes associated with 'being a teacher'	6-7
Children as vulnerable, "unsafe, uncomfortable, unhappy". Keep them safe	8,10
School/teachers/self as safety net	8
Personal investment – 'because I care about them'	8
Circumstances – pressures of role, "forget to smile, even". Class sizes	8,9
Role never ends, 24/7, can't switch off/dream (like parenting??) Total dedication to role	9
Swearing offends because personal affront to their standards and sensibilities, link to own childhood upbringing. What does bad language represent to them??	10,11,12
'Ready Brek' metaphor – insulating against bad language	11
Bad manners the same? "drives me nuts!"	13
Really hard to define 'educate'. <i>Strange?! Mostly 'academic' explanation</i>	14
Support from parents: wanted, expected, academic and behavioural. Varies greatly	14
Collaboration depends upon communication and openness. Leads to "Teamwork"	15-17
Communication = information and understanding > benefits the Working Relationship	17
Sense of confidence/capacity in self/professional self to support parents and children	17
Most important parental attribute is LOVE	17
Role conflation? "Loving, caring, supportive; like a teacher I suppose"	17
(Most) teachers have both perspectives; teacher <i>and</i> parent. Own upbringing dictates own expectation of parents/parenting > <i>Different expectations?</i>	17
Communication: wanted, but only on teachers' terms? (Parental voice?) "be supportive of the decisions you make"	18
(*Teachers attribute/associate a certain respect/regard/professional standing with the role of teacher? Where/what may this view stem from? Own experience of their parent's view of teachers, own experience of being a student, their own regard for education, their own regard and esteem for their own teachers???)	18-19
Being new/young – perceived as a weakness	19
Who knows the child best, parent or teacher?	19
Threat to self and self confidence V confidence and capacity to deal with this threat..."it made me question myself, made me feel a bit insecure" V "But I was pretty confident I was right"	21
Difference between reaction as a teacher and reaction as a parent – "But if somebody said that about my own daughter"	21

Lack of working relationship and mutual understanding leads to conflict	27
CRUX – parent's perception of teacher V teacher's perception of self –	28
"That's why I'm here!" – led to feelings of upset	
Tension between needs of whole class (teacher concern) and needs of one	28
child (parent concern). Therefore parental voice creates tension?	29-30
Only real way to know a parent is through communication	
What teacher needs/expects is a level of interest/involvement from parents –	
"noticing"	30-32
'Parenting' is an active skill, not a passive, protective one (why 'protective'	32
again?)	
Really hard to define 'parent' – "so parenting is...educating, the two go	33
together don't they"	33
Bonsai tree metaphor , pruning, shaping the child...	34-35
Review day – teaching is about <i>people</i> , "Who their history teacher is, what	35
kind of character they are	(37)
Review day – heartfelt language , "irrelevant, completely pointless, rubbish,	
pointless"	35
How intensely personal, intrinsic, important a teacher's practice is to them, "I	36
personally have my own thing", "I do my own thing", "I've got my own	
system", "I will personally photocopy", self funded post-card home as reward	
system	36
Pressures of role – "Because I just haven't got the time"	
Parents worry about silent majority not being prioritised/pushed but this is	
exactly what this teacher is concerned about/aiming for	
Need/wish for parent to be there/be involved – needed and appreciated	
(Quotation) V	
Conflict – 'parent voice' not appreciated over (e.g.), mobile phones** -	
Challenge to teacher's authority, "sigh...I couldn't do anything then...I had to	
bend" (bending leads to conflict with own children...)	
CRUX Who to believe, child or teacher, "the conflict comes from them	
listening to their child and then listening to the teacher..."	
Open, frank, face-to-face communication the key	
'Parent voice' – "Right, you sit there, you sit there. Talk to me, tell me what	
happened", parent has confidence to say this and teacher is prepared to	
accept this path to resolution	

Teacher A 'Maggie'	
Clustering of themes	
<p>Early vocational calling</p> <p>Love of children comes through</p> <p>Enduring effect of childhood memories/experiences</p> <p>Own reflection, "maybe it was to make up for my mum..."</p> <p>Own negative experiences of childhood – neglected - trying to compensate?</p> <p>Cyclical nature of parenting – own need to be better..., break the cycle</p> <p>Inner strength/capacity to overcome adversity; where does this come from?</p> <p>Experience of succeeding at school</p> <p>Source of confidence/capacity?? "science is one of those things people can't argue with"</p> <p>Sense of confidence/capacity in self/professional self to support parents and children</p> <p>Threat to self and self confidence V confidence and capacity to deal with this threat..."it made me question myself, made me feel a bit insecure" V "But I was pretty confident I was right"</p> <p>Being new/young – perceived as a weakness</p> <p>Positive attributes associated with 'being a teacher'</p> <p>Positive experience of education, A levels, university, OPPORTUNITY</p> <p>Language re perfect teacher – obvious love of subject/learning: "inspire, fascination, love, curiosity, thirst for knowledge (contrast to experience of many parents?)</p> <p>Children as vulnerable, "unsafe, uncomfortable, unhappy". Keep them safe</p> <p>School/teachers/self as safety net</p> <p>'Parenting' is an active skill, not a passive, protective one (why 'protective' again?)</p> <p>Personal investment – 'because I care about them'</p> <p>Role never ends, 24/7, can't switch off/dream (like parenting??) Total dedication to role</p> <p>CRUX – parent's perception of teacher V teacher's perception of self – <i>"That's why I'm here!"</i> – led to feelings of upset</p> <p>How intensely personal, intrinsic, important a teacher's practice is to them, "I personally have my own thing", "I do my own thing", "I've got my own system", "I will personally photocopy", self funded post-card home as reward system</p> <p>Review day – teaching is about <i>people</i>, "Who their history teacher is, <i>what kind of character they are</i></p> <p><i>Bonsai tree metaphor</i>, pruning etc</p> <p>Swearing offends because personal affront to their standards and sensibilities, link to own childhood upbringing. What does bad language represent to them??</p> <p>'Ready Brek' metaphor – insulating against bad language</p> <p>Bad manners the same? "drives me nuts!"</p> <p>'Parent voice' – "Right, you sit there, you sit there. Talk to me, tell me what happened", parent has confidence to say this and teacher is prepared to accept this path to resolution</p> <p>CRUX Who to believe, child or teacher, "the conflict comes from them listening to their child and then listening to the teacher..."</p> <p>Tension between needs of whole class (teacher concern) and needs of one child (parent concern). Therefore parental voice creates tension?</p> <p>Support from parents: wanted, expected, academic and behavioural. Varies greatly</p> <p>Communication: wanted, but only on teachers' terms? (Parental voice?) "be supportive of the decisions you make"</p> <p><i>(*Teachers attribute/associate a certain respect/regard/professional standing with the role of teacher? Where/what may this view stem from? Own experience of their parent's view of teachers, own experience of being a</i></p>	

student, their own regard for education, their own regard and esteem for their own teachers???)

Need/wish for parent to be there/be involved – needed and appreciated

(Quotation) V

Conflict – ‘parent voice’ not appreciated over (e.g.), **mobile phones**** -

Challenge to teacher’s authority, “sigh...I couldn’t do anything then...I had to bend” (bending leads to conflict with own children...)

Who knows the child best, parent or teacher?

Communication = information and understanding > benefits the **Working Relationship**

Collaboration depends upon communication and openness. Leads to “Teamwork”

Lack of working relationship and mutual understanding leads to conflict

Only real way to know a parent is through communication

Open, frank, face-to-face communication the key

Review day – **heartfelt language**, “irrelevant, completely pointless, rubbish, pointless”

Parents worry about silent majority not being prioritised/pushed but this is exactly what this teacher is concerned about/aiming for

Really hard to define ‘educate’. *Strange?! Mostly ‘academic’ explanation*

Most important parental attribute is LOVE

Role conflation? “Loving, caring, supportive; like a teacher I suppose”

(Most) teachers have both perspectives; teacher *and* parent.

Own upbringing dictates own expectation of parents/parenting > *Different expectations?*

Difference between reaction as a teacher and reaction as a parent – “But if somebody said that about my own daughter”

Really hard to define ‘parent’ – **“so parenting is...educating, the two go together don’t they”**

What teacher needs/expects is a level of interest/involvement from parents – “noticing”

Circumstances – pressures of role, “forget to smile, even”. Class sizes

Pressures of role – “Because I just haven’t got the time”

Teacher A 'Maggie'		
Table of themes	Page number	Example quotation
Theme 1 Investment of self in role		
(i) Teaching as a vocational calling	1	"I was already in a similar role"
(ii) Personal investment	8,31	"It's because I care about them" "do you want me to laminate it?"
(iii) Breaking the cycle of parenting	4,3	"Maybe it was to make up for my mum" "But somebody had to break the cycle"
(iv) Self/Teacher as safety net	8	"So they need that safety here"
(v) Teacher as self identity	22	"It's why I'm here!"
(vi) Bringing self to role	30	"I personally have my own thing"
Theme 2 Inner confidence and capacity to support		
(i) Confidence in own abilities	21	"But I was pretty confident I was right"
	28	"Like a bonsai tree"
(ii) Confidence/capacity to support	17	"She just needed somebody to tell her it wasn't that he was just naughty and that she was a terrible mum"
		"She was quite neglectful of her time"
(iii) Confidence from overcoming own experience of parenting?	2	
(iv) Confidence from own experience of education?	5	"I went on and did A levels and went to University"
(v) Confidence drawn from own concept of role as teacher?	6	"Someone who inspires..."
		"Science is one of those things people can't argue with"
Theme 3 Parental voice: communication versus tension		
(i) Experience of good communication	18	"It was good for me to find out some information about him, for me to understand him better"
	35	"The conflict comes from them listening to their child, then listening to the teacher"
(ii) Tension through poor communication	26	"I would have to have a conversation with that person really"
(iii) Need for <i>personal</i> relationship	29	"I don't get to see the parents of the children I teach"
(iv) Yearn for 'old' parent's evenings	20	"Be supportive of the decisions you make"
(v) Expectation of support	35	"They insisted that they wore a coat in the lesson. I couldn't (sigh) do anything then..."
(vi) Challenge to own authority?		
Theme 4 Roles; what defines them?		
(i) Educating?	14	"Passing on knowledge and skills...trying to teach them to pass some sort of exam"
(ii) Parenting?	18	"Loving...if your child knows that you love them then they'll forgive you pretty much everything"
		"Loving and caring...like a teacher I suppose"
(iii) Dual perspective, teacher and parent	19	"So parenting is...educating, the two go together don't they"
(iv) Role conflation?	27	"You kind of forget to smile, even, you know?"
(v) Constrained by circumstances	8	

Teacher B 'Penny'	
Initial list of themes	Page number
Vocational calling? – do something useful	1
Had to kick against expectations to become a teacher/have a career	1
Change – 1907, in those days	1
Inspired by own teacher	2
Vocation? "impact, philosophy	2
The past – inspired by aunt - bucked the trend – go for it girl!	2,3
Respect for 'achievement', board of governors, inspirational	3
Inspirational teacher x 3 subject, behaviour, "taught poetry like magic"	3
Personal interest in me as a person V just numbers to be chugged through...	3
Own feelings of neglected childhood, 'determined to right the wrong'	3
Qualities - 'considered friend', reliable, scaffolding development etc	4
Personal investment in children; "I'm smiling like crazy at the thought of him..." "I could kick myself...but I've compensated"	5
Vocational calling, 'really enjoy', pride at job 'I've got my family back'	6
Self as teacher "one and the same thing"	7
Personal investment – taking the work home, "thinking about the kids"	6
Personal nature of working environment, 'knew him, knew his mum	7
Need for personal working relationship – 'we just really hit it off'	8
Confidence/capacity and will to support – "I sort out problems"	8
Role is to broaden horizons	9
Children vulnerable to Facebook – 'more dangerous than anything else'	10
Confidence – 'there's one thing about having control' – primacy in P/T relationship? – "but that's my decision"	11
'Educate' – move on, personally, interest wise, confidence wise', "the whole package"	11
Police involvement – 'we've been the person they call for support' (parents), "don't get middle classy or you will lose them"	11
(parents), the whole range from crying to baseball bat wielding	12
"Concern" – kids want to see either student or teacher get clubbed	12
Confidence in own abilities – making that decision, sticking with it, persuade others	13
Change – when my generation of teachers has gone...	13
The system, 'Lose that to a whole lot of data, blah, blah, blah...'	13
Vocation – it would be nice to retire, but...I'll just see so and so through (X2)	13
Confidence/capacity to support + Primacy in P/T relationship – "able to offer solutions"	13
Perfect parent = involved and keeping them safe. Children <i>vulnerable</i> ?	14
Parenting is a long and complex role, high expectations and responsibilities	14-16
View of parenting irrespective of resources... (Quotation) – no assumptions	15
Personal investment - 'clothes cleaned, dried, back on!'	16
Personal investment, intense language, 'scream, abuse', frustration at non cooperative parents – need cooperation	17
'Parent' – "move on", exactly the same as 'Educate'! Similar, complex definition	17
If teacher has to 'parent', it leads to conflict	18
Collaboration constrained by time pressures	18
Extended 'medicine' metaphor. (Why medicine??? – medical model?)	18
Confidence/capacity/willingness to support: "Sometimes they just need somebody to talk to" (means teacher needs to be that somebody)	19
Language – total dedication re safeguarding issues	19
Vocation - "It's for the kids"	19
Need for face-to-face communication – laments loss of 'old' parents' evenings	20
Confidence – "I'm quite confident...in difficult situations"	20
Teacher + Parent = watertight safety net. Teamwork	20
Negotiation/bartering, "Grey stilton" metaphor. "I spend the whole of my time..."	21
Working together, 'all in the same boat' metaphor... (extended 'all')	22
Sometimes teacher isn't prepared to reflect on their practice - POWER?	23
Some parents have automatic respect and reverence for word/opinion of teacher	24
Communication – "90% bad news", "we're not saying this child's done well..."	24
Detailed personal knowledge, "his favourite box of Weetabix..."	24

Teacher B Penny	
Clustering of themes	
<p>Vocational calling? – do something useful Had to kick against expectations to become a teacher/have a career Vocation? “impact, philosophy Vocational calling, ‘really enjoy’, pride at job ‘I’ve got my family back’ Self as teacher “one and the same thing” Vocation – it would be nice to retire, but...I’ll just see so and so through (X2) Vocation - “It’s for the kids” Language – total dedication re safeguarding issues Inspired by own teacher The past – inspired by aunt - bucked the trend – go for it girl! Respect for ‘achievement’, board of governors, inspirational Inspirational teacher x 3 subject, behaviour, “taught poetry like magic” Personal interest in me as a person V just numbers to be chugged through... Own feelings of neglected childhood, ‘determined to right the wrong’ Qualities - ‘considered friend’, reliable, scaffolding development etc Role is to broaden horizons ‘Educate’ – move on, personally, interest wise, confidence wise’, “the whole package” Change over time, 1907, in those days Change in role when my generation of teachers has gone... Change in the system, ‘Lose that to a whole lot of data, blah, blah, blah...’ If teacher has to ‘parent’, it leads to conflict Extended ‘medicine’ metaphor. (<i>Why medicine??? – medical model?</i>) Sometimes teacher isn’t prepared to reflect on their practice - POWER? Some parents have automatic respect and reverence for word/opinion of teacher Personal nature of working relationship, ‘knew him, knew his mum Need for personal working relationship – ‘we just really hit it off’ Detailed personal knowledge, “his favourite box of Weetabix...” Confidence/capacity and will to support – “I sort out problems” Confidence – ‘there’s one thing about having control’ – primacy in P/T relationship? – “but that’s my decision” Confidence in own abilities – making that decision, sticking with it, persuading others Confidence/capacity to support + Primacy in P/T relationship – “able to offer solutions” Confidence – “I’m quite confident...in difficult situations” Confidence/capacity/willingness to support: “Sometimes they just need somebody to talk to” (means teacher needs to be that somebody) Police involvement – ‘we’ve been the person they call for support’ Confidence to protect, against ‘baseball bat wielding’ parents Personal investment in children; “I’m smiling like crazy at the thought of him actually doing it, you know?” “I could kick myself...but I’ve compensated” Personal investment – taking the work home, “thinking about the kids” Personal investment - ‘clothes cleaned, dried, back on!’ Personal investment, intense language, ‘scream, abuse’, frustration at non cooperative parents – need cooperation (parents), “don’t get middle classy or you will lose them” Children vulnerable to Facebook – ‘more dangerous than anything else’ ‘Parent’ – “move on”, exactly the same as ‘Educate’! Similar, complex definition View of parenting irrespective of resources... (Quotation) – no assumptions This teacher ‘gets it’* experience of life, acknowledgement of death, illness, alcoholism CIRCUMSTANCES. Do parents perceive most teachers this way? QUOTATIONS</p>	

<p>Perfect parent = involved and keeping them safe. Children <i>vulnerable</i>?</p> <p>Parenting is a long and complex role, high expectations and responsibilities</p> <p>Collaboration constrained by time pressures</p> <p>Negotiation/bartering, "Grey stilton" metaphor. "I spend the whole of my time..."</p> <p>Working together, 'all in the same boat' metaphor... (extended 'all')</p> <p>Communication – "90% bad news", "we're not saying this child's done well..."</p> <p>Teacher + Parent = watertight safety net. Teamwork</p> <p>Need for face-to-face communication – laments loss of 'old' parents' evenings</p>	
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Teacher B Penny		
Table of themes	Page number	Example quotation
1 'Teacher' as self identity		
(i) Vocational calling	1	"I wanted to do something useful"
(ii) Lifelong, inspired from youth by teachers and aunt	2,2	"They were really inspirational", "Taught poetry like magic"
(iii) Fight against family expectations	1	"I had a really inspirational aunt"
(iv) Fight against adversity	3	"There was mutiny on the bounty!"
(v) Personal investment in role/children	16	"Determined to right the wrong"
(vi) Self as teacher	7	"A quick wash...through the tumble dryer, and back on the kid's back"
2 Confidence and capacity to support	8, 13,2	"One and the same thing"
(i) In own judgement and abilities	19	"I sort out problems", "Able to offer solutions", "With teaching...you can have more of an impact..."
(ii) As a 'container' of emotions	11	"They just need somebody to talk to"
(iii) Willingness/desire to help	11,13	"The person they call for support"
(iv) Assumption of dominant role, taking charge	18	"But that's my decision" "Making that decision...sticking with it..."
3 Perception of teacher's role	4,9	
(i) Multifaceted	11	"Considered friend", "Scaffolding development", "Broaden horizons"
(ii) Parent by proxy	18	"They haven't had family...we've been the adult"
(iii) ...though boundaried	21	"If a teacher is trying to parent as well...you get the conflict"
(iv) As one of negotiation	11	"The whole of my time is spent negotiating and bartering"
(v) As 'safety net' for vulnerable children	12,26	"Issues with drugs and alcohol...keep them on the straight and narrow"
4 Perception of parents and parents' role		
(i) Need for genuine empathy	12	"Don't get middle classy or you'll lose them" "Sometimes you have to experience a little bit of difficulty to understand it"
(ii) Experience of range of parents	15	"From crying to baseball bat wielding"
(iii) Complex and long term role	15	"Having the commitment...actually think ahead...make the child interesting, sociable before we get them"
(iv) Independent of resources (make no assumptions)	25,26	"It doesn't just go with how much money...it goes with the caring"
(v) ...yet subject to circumstances	14	"A partner who's died, been very
(vi) Keeping children safe		
5 Need for genuine collaboration	22	
(i) Based on close working relationship	20	

(ii)	Teamwork = unbeatable	24	ill, got drink problems..."
(iii)	Based on intimate personal knowledge	24	"Who safeguarded their child...made sure that they were safe
(iv)	Need for positive communication		"You have to be on board, going down the same river on the same boat"
			"The child hasn't got any cracks in that relationship...because we have it watertight, yeah?"
			"His favourite box of Weetabix"
			"90% is bad news

Teacher C 'Eleanor'	
Initial list of themes	Page number
Inspirational teachers – got me interested in learning new skills	1
Predisposition to a 'caring' profession – (nursing)	1
Inspired by early experiences – packing father's 1 st aid kit	1
Confidence in own abilities, based on success – 'I was the star turn'	1
Confidence – used to success as a child – 'I picked it up really quickly'	2
Confidence – 'we had a very intellectual discussion', 'all the exams you could do'	2,2 3
Early love of learning – 'what's next...what else can I learn'	3,3
Inspirational teachers, positive experience of education, 'pushed by amazing teachers'	4 4
Confidence in own capacity to 'get where I am now'	7
Obviously values this 'place' – reverence for position/profession	7
Moved by childhood difficulties to make a difference now	8
Instant love for teaching – 'I really enjoyed it'	8
Confidence - loves professional autonomy – '900 different ways '	8
Personality of teacher important – 'incredible, nuts, very fiery'	9
Personality important – 'inspirational not as teacher but as person'	9
Intelligence valued highly – 'he was so intellectual....' (extended quotation)	9
Confidence - in capacity 'to just go (clicks fingers)...	10
'Self' and working persona different	10
Conscious of teaching status – 'because it <u>is</u> a profession'	12
Complex, demanding role – 'everything', 'infinite'	12
Division between 'self' and role – 'well, I'm quite professional...'	12
Professional division – 'I've never been in a <i>friendly</i> conversation with a student...'	13,13 14
Separate identities – 'this is what I do here, and this is me',	14
Students see me as 'teacher in role...but that's still work', 'utterly, 100% professional'	14,14 14
Professional divide - Loco Parentis – 'not a bond, a working relationship'	15
Teacher's consistency important – see you here every time...see you every day	17 18
Need to provide place of safety – 'at the top of my list', 'safe place to discuss things'	19 19
Safety and security – 'my classroom is their classroom', safe place to unload	19
Role as confidante – listens/overhears in confidence	19
'Educate' = social skills above subject specific skills – 'it's huge, it's massive'	19
Confidence and capacity to take on challenges – 'can't do that...YET'	19
Regular communication with parents highly valued	20
Positive communication also, 'the one good phone call of the week'	20
Heartfelt language – 'they've been <i>absolutely Incredible</i> today'	21
Confidence/capacity to assume parental role/responsibility "when parents don't possess the willingness or understanding"	21 21-22
Ideal parent definition the same as ideal teacher	22
Another 'tree' metaphor, parent role grows, branches, leaves etc	22
'Parent' = complex, multifaceted role; imparting knowledge etc	22
Crux of parenting is unconditional love, 'even if you detest what they have done'	23 23
Big differences between parenting and teaching are above, plus 'professionalism'	24-25
Extended 'bridge' metaphor, to fill 'big gap ' between teacher and parent	
'Gap' grows/shrinks with experience and teachers' abilities	26
'I put the gap there, to protect myself as much as to protect the child'	
'The gap is bigger if you are a parent yourself'	26
Sense of agency borne of confidence – 'Right, let's just do it!'	
Acknowledgement/recognition of parents' circumstances', 'very difficult times...that's wits end isn't it...'	28 29

Some parents need teacher's support – this teacher has the capacity to give it...and advise parents who 'just don't know what to do'	30
Teacher has emotional and intellectual resources to be there for parents in a bad place, there to communicate and listen	30
School based/on teachers terms, power resides with teacher in this relationship – 'parent comes in'	30
Acknowledgement of circumstances faced by some children – 'awful, incredible'	31
Core of parenting (and the difference between 'teaching?') unconditional love and doing 'absolutely anything to make sure they are ok'	31
Parenting = imparting a set of sound morals	31
Carving out 'not just a career path, but a personality path' – longer term considerations	31,32
Complex role – 'huge, there are not many words to describe what it is...'	32
Collaboration, 'twice a year, on review day' (on schools terms – parents summoned?)	32
Close working relationship is more a personal choice than a systemic arrangement	32
Power resides with teacher... 'so if I think I'd like to bring a parent in'	
Considers this to be collaboration, 'we, we, we'	
Would love a better relationship with parents	
Extent of working relationship (WR) depends on <i>individual teacher's beliefs and decisions</i>	32
This teacher has good WR because 'they're essential to how a child accesses the school'	33
Power of WR – can be 'fantastically powerful'	33
Power resides with teacher in WR – 'I can call the parent and say...anything you feel you can support me with at home?'	33
WR – parents need to feel respected and that teacher is on their side = 'powerful'	34
No support from parents means you have to 'tow the professional line'	34
Used to not having support, 'no surprise after 10 years at the school'	35
"I don't barter" – but is prepared to collaborate. What does this signify?	
Collaboration requires in-depth WR, which requires prior knowledge and <i>will</i>	35
Collaboration relies on individual teacher's beliefs. Some chose to 'go in blind', others read the files. 'Clean slate V 'flagged-up'	
Cannot understand 'blind' approach – ' How could it work?'	
Cites some 'established teachers, in the business for 30 years'. 'it works for them, not the kids'	35
Close WR works – 'the power of SIMS', 'yes, collaborating with parents hugely important'	35
Power resides with school – '...they will be collaborated with!'	35
Conflict can stem from parents' own experience of how they were treated at school	36
Cyclical nature of parenting - 'Genetic learning' – 'learned responses...'	37
Power resides with school – the answer is, ' <i>get the parents in</i> '	37
Close communication needed – 'face to face, eye to eye contact'	37
Need to share a part of you, 'share history...part of you can come across... "I'm a parent myself"	37
Need to find similarities, 'have a common ground'	37
WR - difficult for parent to relate to teachers "we are people...if they can see even a little tiny bit of person in you"	
Not always possible, as 'school is loaded with these misconceptions'	38
School is a professional workplace, should not be 'all chummy'	38
WR needs to be face-to-face, 'I am very much a people person'	
This is an <i>individual</i> decision, 'some people like to sort things out over the phone'	38
WR – experience says face-to-face is best Parents' assumptions	38

Teacher C 'Eleanor'	
Clustering of themes	
<p>Inspirational teachers – got me interested in learning new skills</p> <p>Predisposition to a 'caring' profession – (nursing)</p> <p>Inspired by early experiences – packing father's 1st aid kit</p> <p>Early love of learning – 'what's next...what else can I learn'</p> <p>Inspirational teachers, positive experience of education, 'pushed by amazing teachers'</p> <p>Instant love for teaching – 'I really enjoyed it'</p> <p>Conscious of teaching status – 'because it <u>is</u> a profession'</p> <p>Complex, demanding role – 'everything', 'infinite'</p> <p>Teacher's consistency important – see you here every time...see you every day</p> <p>Need to provide place of safety – 'at the top of my list', 'safe place to discuss things'</p> <p>Safety and security – 'my classroom is their classroom', safe place to unload</p> <p>Role as confidante – listens/overhears in confidence</p> <p>'Educate' = social skills above subject specific skills – 'it's huge, it's massive'</p> <p>Obviously values this 'place' – reverence for position/profession</p> <p>Moved by childhood difficulties to make a difference now</p> <p>Personality of teacher important – 'incredible, nuts, very fiery'</p> <p>Personality important – 'inspirational not as teacher but as person'</p> <p>Intelligence valued highly – 'he was so intellectual....' (extended quotation)</p> <p>Teacher has emotional and intellectual resources to be there for parents in a bad place, there to communicate and listen</p> <p>Confidence in own capacity to 'get where I am now'</p> <p>Confidence - loves professional autonomy – '900 different ways '</p> <p>Confidence - in capacity 'to just go (clicks fingers)...</p> <p>Confidence and capacity to take on challenges – 'can't do that...YET'</p> <p>Confidence/capacity to assume parental role/responsibility "when parents don't possess the willingness or understanding"</p> <p>Some parents need teacher's support – this teacher has the capacity to give it...and advise parents who 'just don't know what to do'</p> <p>Sense of agency borne of confidence – 'Right, let's just do it!'</p> <p>Confidence in own abilities, based on success – 'I was the star turn'</p> <p>Confidence – used to success as a child – 'I picked it up really quickly'</p> <p>Division between 'self' and role – 'well, I'm quite professional...'</p> <p>Professional division – 'I've never been in a friendly conversation with a student...'</p> <p>School is a professional workplace, should not be 'all chummy'</p> <p>Separate identities – 'this is what I do here, and this is me',</p> <p>Students see me as 'teacher in role...but that's still work', 'utterly, 100% professional'</p> <p>Professional divide - Loco Parentis – 'not a bond, a working relationship'</p> <p>Ideal parent definition the same as ideal teacher</p> <p>Another 'tree' metaphor, parent role grows, branches, leaves etc</p> <p>'Parent' = complex, multifaceted role; imparting knowledge etc</p> <p>Parenting = imparting a set of sound morals</p> <p>Carving out 'not just a career path, but a personality path' – longer term considerations</p> <p>Complex role – 'huge, there are not many words to describe what it is...'</p> <p>Crux of parenting is unconditional love, 'even if you detest what they have done'</p> <p>Big differences between parenting and teaching are above, plus 'professionalism'</p> <p>Extended 'bridge' metaphor, to fill 'big gap ' between teacher and parent</p> <p>'Gap' grows/shrinks with experience and teachers' abilities</p> <p>'I put the gap there, to protect myself as much as to protect the child'</p> <p>'The gap is bigger if you are a parent yourself'</p> <p>Core of parenting (and the difference between 'teaching?') unconditional love and doing 'absolutely anything to make sure they are ok</p>	

Power resides with school – the answer is, 'get the parents in'

Power resides with teacher in WR – 'I can call the parent and say...anything you feel you can support me with at home?'

Power resides with school – '...they will be collaborated with!'

Collaboration, 'twice a year, on review day' (on schools terms – parents summoned?)

Close working relationship is more a personal choice than a systemic arrangement

Power resides with teacher... 'so if I think I'd like to bring a parent in'

School based/on teachers terms, power resides with teacher in this relationship – 'parent comes in'

Extent of working relationship (WR) depends on individual teacher's beliefs and decisions

This is an **individual** decision, 'some people like to sort things out over the phone'

"I don't barter" – but is prepared to collaborate. What does this signify?

Collaboration relies on individual teacher's beliefs. Some chose to 'go in blind', others read the files. 'Clean slate V 'flagged-up'

Cannot understand 'blind' approach – '**How** could it work?'

Cites some 'established teachers, in the business for 30 years'. 'it works for them, not the kids'

Regular communication with parents highly valued

Positive communication also, 'the one good phone call of the week'

Heartfelt language – 'they've been **absolutely incredible** today'

Considers this to be collaboration, 'we, we, we'

Would love a better relationship with parents

This teacher has good WR because 'they're essential to how a child accesses the school'

Power of WR – can be 'fantastically powerful'

Close communication needed – 'face to face, eye to eye contact'

WR needs to be face-to-face, 'I am very much a people person'

WR – experience says face-to-face is best

No support from parents means you have to 'tow the professional line'

Used to not having support, 'no surprise after 10 years at the school'

Collaboration requires in-depth WR, which requires prior knowledge and will

Close WR works – 'the power of SIMS', 'yes, collaborating with parents hugely important'

WR – parents need to feel respected and that teacher is on their side = 'powerful'

Conflict can stem from parents' own experience of how they were treated at school

Cyclical nature of parenting - 'Genetic learning' – 'learned responses...'

Parents' assumptions misconceptions? "who is this jumped up middle class idiot"

Feels it is a misconception that teachers come from middle class backgrounds

But one which parents have – "we're talking about generalisations, but, yeah"

Need to share a part of you, 'share history...part of you can come across... "I'm a parent myself"

Need to find similarities, 'have a common ground'

Acknowledgement of circumstances faced by some children – 'awful, incredible'

Acknowledgement/recognition of parents' circumstances', 'very difficult times...that's wits end isn't it...'

WR - difficult for parent to relate to teachers "we are people...if they can see even a little tiny bit of person in you"

Not always possible, as 'school is loaded with these misconceptions'

Teacher C 'Eleanor'			
Table of themes		Page number	Example quotation
Theme 1 Love for the profession			
(i)	Early love of learning and education	3	'What's next, what else can I learn?'
(ii)	Predisposition for 'caring' profession	1	'I wanted to be a nurse'
(iii)	Shaped by childhood	7	'But somebody always managed to make things OK'
(iv)	Inspired by teachers	3	'Pushed by amazing teachers'
(v)	Reverence for role/profession	4,	'I wouldn't be where I am now'
(vi)	Values personal safeguarding role	10	'Because it <i>is</i> a profession'
(vii)	Investment of self in students	14	'My classroom is a safe, secure environment'
		15	'I always spend at least 2 minutes...'
Theme 2 Confidence and capacity		2	
(i)	From own experiences of success	23,	
(ii)	In sense of personal agency and autonomy	7	'I picked it up really quickly'
(iii)	Emotional and intellectual capacity to support parents	19	'Right, let's just do it!'
(iv)	To take on challenges	18	'I always like to do things a little bit differently'
		13	'I've got the capacity to deal with that'
Theme 3 'Teacher' as discrete from 'self'			
(i)	Separation of self from role	12	'And that's where a really supportive teacher can come in'
(ii)	Professional detachment	13	'I can't do this...YET'
(iii)	Professional divide	14	
Theme 4 'Parenting' as discrete from 'teaching'			
(i)	Distinguished by 'love' and acceptance	21	'I've never defined myself by what I do'
(ii)	Nurturing over time	20	'They'll see me, 'teacher in role'
(iii)	The dividing line	21	'I've never been in a <i>friendly</i> conversation with a student'
(iv)	The line is blurred...teacher, parent <i>and</i> bridge	21	'Utterly, 100% professional'
Theme 5 Importance of Working Relationship (WR)			
(i)	Personal investment in WR	32	'Loco parentis not a bond, a working relationship'
(ii)	Intensely personal relationship	37	
(iii)	Relies on empathetic understanding and shared 'common ground'	23	
		37	'There is an unconditional love for that child, though you may absolutely detest what that child has done...'
		37	'And the tree gets bigger and adds more branches and lots of leaves...'
		37	'That's where it stops...it kind of goes up to the edge...respect...'
		37	'I'm like the bridge I suppose, you've got teacher, big gap, parent, and then you've got this kind of bridge, with a meeting point maybe in the middle somewhere'
		37	'I've obviously built up this over the years, it's fantastically powerful'

			'Face to face, eye to eye contact'
(iv)	WR subject to powerful outside influences	35	'Very difficult times..that's wits end isn't it'
		37	'You have to share history with these people'
		35	'We are people...if they can see even a little tiny bit of person in you'
			'How the parents were treated at school themselves, that's a huge one...'
			'School is loaded with all these misconceptions'
			'Genetic learning...learned responses'
Theme 6 Power within WR lies with the school/teacher			
(i)	Times chosen by school	31	'Twice a year, on review day'
(ii)	Place chosen by school	36	'The answer is, get the parents in'
(iii)	At teacher's discretion	31	'So if I think I'd like to bring a parent in'
(iv)	Dependent upon personal beliefs and decisions of teacher	31, 32	'Because I am the type of tutor that I am'
(v)	Teacher pulls the strings...	32	'Some teachers think...I've seen them twice, and that's OK'
		33	'I can call the parent and say...anything you feel you can support me with at home?'
(vi)	Parents as challenge?	38	'I don't barter'
			'chummy"...it would be wrong, a challenge of another extreme'

Parent A 'Jess'	
Initial list of themes	Page number
Circumstances – health	1,
Not repeating own childhood experiences	3-6
Circumstances – ex partner/spouse	6,21,36
Who to believe – teacher or child?	7,8
Lack of automatic professional regard for teacher (and profession?)	8
Circumstances – home life	9
Teachers don't listen/accept parental expertise	10, 41,
Parents prepared to challenge authority – parental voice	+++
Only the naughty ones get noticed	11
Parent takes 'whole-life' view of child – the difference?	12,23
Personality of teacher is key – 'clashes'	12
Differences in approach of teachers, assumption of authority	13
Role confusion – who is in charge?	14
Role confusion/contradiction – "I don't think but I do think..."	18
Locus of control – "child genetics"	19
Better communication needed between school and parent – only hear bad news	20
Parents kept on periphery – 'only see what they want you to see'	21-
Unconditional love of a parent – the difference??	23,40
Assumption of full responsibility – teachers there to enhance	26
Teachers are 'the net to protect' those that need extra help	27
Teachers are 'last form of defence'	27
Society has changed – two sorts of role models to follow: work hard for very little or do nothing and expect everything – children need 'dreams'	28
Teachers need to stimulate, motivate, excite, encourage; not as a friend but as a mentor	30
Working class V middle class ' <i>assumptions</i> '	30
<i>(Unfair) Assumptions can lead to (unfair) judgements</i>	31
Prepared to challenge teacher's actions (and authority?) parental voice	31, 32
This is led by my question, but subject came loudly from focus groups... "very judgemental, very down putting"	32
Assumptions: 'gobby child' = 'gobby' parent	33
Assumptions come half from experience and half 'just judgemental'	34
Locus of control - discipline gone – teachers powerless	34
Feel sorry for teachers – what can they do??	34
Circumstances – society has changed – morals gone	35
What does it mean to be a child today – easier/harder – confusion	36
Lazy society today – "how can you teach a child morals"	36
'Community' has gone – no communities any more. (<i>Teachers have to teach in this rudderless world</i>)	37
Circumstances – systemic problems – red tape, discipline, idiots in the government, lack of discipline, accusations, powerless teachers – (locus again)	38
National Service! – (how badly are things perceived?)	39
Communication should be 'quick and dirty' – pre-emptive emails + website	40
Who is the expert on that child?? Parent or teacher – parents don't feel listened to	40,43
Lack of trust in each other	41
Need for better communication "why no website?" – early warning of problems	42-43
'System' blamed for son's deficient education, not 'teachers' as a profession – system = old fashioned 3Rs gone, govt-led push for exam results, child has too many teachers – teachers don't see child enough to 'know' them - locus	43-44
	45
	46
	46
	47

Parent A 'Jess'	
Clustering of themes	
<p>Circumstances – health</p> <p>Circumstances – own experience of childhood</p> <p>Circumstances – ex partner/spouse</p> <p>Circumstances – home life</p> <p>Circumstances – society has changed – morals gone, discipline gone...</p> <p>Circumstances – systemic issues</p> <p>Lack of automatic regard for teacher/teaching profession</p> <p>Who to believe – teacher or child?</p> <p>Who is the expert on the child – teacher or parent?</p> <p>Teachers don't listen/accept parental expertise</p> <p>Parents prepared to challenge authority – parental voice</p> <p>Personality of teacher is key – 'clashes'</p> <p>Differences in approach of teachers, assumption of authority</p> <p>Prepared to challenge teacher's actions (and authority?) parental voice</p> <p>Who is the expert on that child?? Parent or teacher – parents don't feel listened to</p> <p>Lack of trust in each other</p> <p>Parent takes 'whole-life' view of child – the difference?</p> <p>Unconditional love of a parent – the difference??</p> <p>Role confusion – who is in charge?</p> <p>Role confusion/contradiction – "I don't think but I do think..."</p> <p>Assumption of full responsibility – teachers there to 'enhance'</p> <p>Teachers are 'the net to protect' those that need extra help</p> <p>Teachers are 'last form of defence'</p> <p>Teachers need to stimulate, motivate, excite, encourage; not as a friend but as a mentor</p> <p>Locus of control - discipline gone – teachers powerless</p> <p>Locus of control – "child genetics"</p> <p>Circumstances – systemic problems – red tape, discipline, idiots in the government, lack of discipline, accusations, powerless teachers – (locus again)</p> <p>Society has changed – two sorts of role models to follow: work hard for very little or do nothing and expect everything – children need 'dreams'</p> <p>Feel sorry for teachers – what can they do??</p> <p>Society has changed – morals gone</p> <p>What does it mean to be a child today – easier/harder – confusion</p> <p>Lazy society today – "how can you teach a child morals"</p> <p>'Community' has gone – no communities any more. <i>(Teachers have to teach in this rudderless world)</i></p> <p>National Service! – (how badly are things perceived?)</p> <p>Better communication needed between school and parent – only hear bad news</p> <p>Parents kept on periphery – 'only see what they want you to see'</p> <p>Communication should be 'quick and dirty' – pre-emptive emails + website</p> <p>Need for better communication "why no website?" – early warning of problems</p> <p>One point of communication/contact needed – "PILLAR TO POST..."</p> <p>Working class V middle class 'assumptions'</p> <p><i>(Unfair) Assumptions can lead to (unfair) judgements</i></p> <p><i>(This is led by my question, but subject came loudly from focus groups...) "very judgemental, very down putting"</i></p> <p>Assumptions: 'gobby child' = 'gobby' parent</p> <p>Assumptions come half from experience and half 'just judgemental'</p> <p>'System' blamed for son's deficient education, not 'teachers' as a profession – system = old fashioned 3Rs gone, govt-led push for exam results, child has too many teachers – teachers don't see child enough to 'know them</p>	

Parent A 'Jess'		
Table of themes		Page number
Theme 1 'Locus of control'		
(i) The system	45	'Why haven't we got the old fashioned 3R's...?'
(ii) Society, community, discipline	36	'Society has changed...'
	38	'It was a community thing...'
	35	'Teachers should be allowed to discipline'
(iii) Individual responsibility; parents?, teachers?, children?	1	'It's hard 'cause he's my ex'
	6	'And they are right in saying..'
	20	'I think it's the individual...'
(iv) Local bobby scenario	35	'the old police bobby used to clip you across the head, you went home and told your mum and then they'd clip you across the head'
Theme 2 'Parental voice'		
(i) As expert on your own child	10	'Cause some of the teachers'
(ii) Preparedness to challenge individual teachers and 'expert' opinion	10	'You can't do that'
	11	'I'm a non-believer in Ritalin'
(iii) Automatic regard for teachers/profession?	7	'If there's problems in school, I'll get the full story'
(iv) Regard dependent upon individual personality of teacher – not a given	14	'Personality clash, big style'
Theme 3 'Changing role perceptions'		
(i) Role of parent* (see Venn diagram)	26	'How to just achieve...'
	27	'You must love your child...'
(ii) Wide-ranging role of teacher* (see Venn diagram)	19	'Nooo. I teach...'
	19	'The whole package, the whole of the child, the social and the manners'
(iii) Role confusion?	19	'I don't think they should have to, but I believe they should...'
	18	'You're in charge...'
(iv) Defining role of parent – unconditional love?	26	'The main thing is...love, no matter what'
	26	'From birth till the day you die'
- 'whole life' view of child?	12	'The army won't touch them...'
(v) Changing roles – acknowledgement of difficulty of teachers' role	39	'It would have been easier to be a teacher back in my day'
(vi) Role of child – lack of boundaries?	36	'young people are getting away with murder'
Theme 4 'Need for better communication'		
(i) Quick and frequent	44	'Why don't they e mail me...'
(ii) Pre-emptive	44	'Why didn't you tell me there was a problem?'
(iii) Single point of communication/contact	46	'Stop passing them from pillar to post...'
(iv) To tackle lack of trust	42	'They don't believe each other'
(v) To tackle unfair assumptions/judgements	32	'Why would you assume I don't work?'

Parent B 'Steve'	
Initial list of themes	Page number
Real world circumstances, drugs, drinking, leave home at 14/15	2
Being a parent = being there for your child	3
It's hard to be a parent – 'oh my God'	4
Not repeating own childhood experiences – dad never there	4
Real world circumstances – parents have to work	4
Difference?? – unconditional - "but the difference is..."	5
Parent as positive role model – behaviour, moderation, relationships etc	7
Parent should give choices; choices = consequences	9
Circumstances – abuse, death of sibling, violence, verbal abuse, chronic neglect...	11
Need to communicate; parents know all about child's whole life, teachers need to too	12-15
Own childhood experiences – stitches in 'rich tapestry of life	16
Need/wish to break the cycle of bad parenting	17
Parenting = lifetime commitment – "never ends" – Difference??	17-18
School = hand over of responsibilities (different to Parent A)	18
Vivid memories of school days – another 'stitch'?	19
Old days V now, teachers' word was LAW	19
Different generations – wouldn't stand for it now...	19
Times have changed – teachers <i>WERE professional</i> people!	19-20
Different world now – lack of discipline – basic manners	21
Teachers POWERLESS now – can't discipline	21-22
LOCUS , system , human rights, personality SPECTRUM (age and class) of teacher	22
Wrong with society, wrong with world = discipline – ex soldiers as teachers	22
Powerless teachers	23
Manners and swearing is a parents issue	24
Parent as positive role model	25
Would prefer more contact than 'just parents' evening'	26
Contradiction – would welcome more communication but 'overloaded with info'	27
Hard for school to get the balance right?	28-29
Role confusion – to 'parent' + 'to 'educate', same but different!!	30
Teacher has social worker role	31
No automatic back up/regard for word of teacher – down to individual teachers	32
Locus of control – "the school can never win"	32
Perfect teacher = "the iron fist in the velvet glove" – (names teacher in the school)	35-36
Some teachers as 'middle class pratts' ; judgemental, dismissive attitudes	37
Citing 'others' who may be put off, not himself (same as Jess, citing 'friends'???)	39
Teachers and children have it harder these days – no discipline, no respect	40
Confusing role for children today – not allowed to be children (as per Jess)	42
Only called in if child done wrong, "parents today just drop their child off..."	43
Teachers powerless to discipline	44
Parent voice, "I would fight that child's right" – no automatic regard for teacher's word	44
Parents' voice increased since parents were at school themselves	44
Yearn for days of 'clip 'round the ear from a Bobby' (as per Jess)	
Teachers' not very happy about being challenged by parents	45-46
Schools should be backed up by parents more than they are	46
Contradiction/confusion? Teachers or parents as 'back-up'???	47-48
Locus – crux – blame = government, society in general, discipline	49
Teachers powerless – not allowed to do anything	49
Locus, government, human rights, Swedes, "Rights in the right places"	50-51
Different world today – "who's the teachers, who's the pupils??"	52
Teachers don't dress as they should, collar and tie demands respect	53

Parent B 'Steve'	
Clustering of themes	
<p>Real world circumstances, drugs, drinking, leave home at 14/15</p> <p>Real world circumstances – parents have to work</p> <p>Circumstances – abuse, death of sibling, violence, verbal abuse, chronic neglect...</p> <p>Need to communicate; parents know all about child's whole life, teachers need to too</p> <p>Being a parent = being there for your child</p> <p>It's hard to be a parent – 'oh my God'</p> <p>Parent as positive role model – behaviour, moderation, relationships etc</p> <p>Parent should give choices; choices = consequences</p> <p>Role confusion – to 'parent' + 'to 'educate', same but different!!</p> <p>Manners and swearing is a parents issue</p> <p>Parent as positive role model</p> <p>Not repeating own childhood experiences – dad never there</p> <p>Own childhood experiences – stitches in 'rich tapestry of life</p> <p>Vivid memories of school days – another 'stitch'?</p> <p>Need/wish to break the cycle of bad parenting</p> <p>Difference?? – Unconditional - "but the difference is..."</p> <p>Parenting = lifetime commitment – "never ends" – Difference??</p> <p>Teachers and children have it harder these days – no discipline, no respect</p> <p>Confusing role for children today – not allowed to be children (as per Jess)</p> <p>Yearn for days of 'clip 'round the ear from a Bobby' (as per Jess)</p> <p>Wrong with society, wrong with world = discipline – ex soldiers as teachers</p> <p>Old days V now, teachers' word was LAW</p> <p>Different generations – wouldn't stand for it now...</p> <p>Times have changed – teachers <i>WERE professional</i> people!</p> <p>Different world now – lack of discipline – basic manners</p> <p>Teachers POWERLESS now – can't discipline</p> <p>LOCUS , system , human rights, personality SPECTRUM (age and class) of teacher</p> <p>Wrong with society, wrong with world = discipline – ex soldiers as teachers</p> <p>Powerless teachers</p> <p>Locus of control – "the school can never win"</p> <p>Teachers powerless to discipline</p> <p>Locus – crux – blame = government, society in general, discipline</p> <p>Teachers powerless – not allowed to do anything</p> <p>Locus, government, human rights, Swedes, "Rights in the right places"</p> <p>Only called in if child done wrong, "parents today just drop their child off..."</p> <p>Would prefer more contact than 'just parents' evening'</p> <p>Contradiction – would welcome more communication but 'overloaded with info'</p> <p>Hard for school to get the balance right?</p> <p>Teacher has social worker role</p> <p>Perfect teacher = "the iron fist in the velvet glove" – (names teacher in the school)</p> <p>Contradiction/confusion? Teachers or parents as 'back-up'???</p> <p>Different world today – "who's the teachers, who's the pupils??"</p> <p>Teachers don't dress as they should, collar and tie demands respect</p> <p>School = hand over of responsibilities (different to Parent A)</p> <p>Role confusion – to 'parent' + 'to 'educate', same but different!!</p> <p>Times have changed – teachers <i>WERE professional</i> people!</p> <p>Some teachers as 'middle class pratts' ; judgemental, dismissive attitudes</p> <p>No automatic back up/regard for word of teacher – down to individual teachers</p> <p>Teachers' not very happy about being challenged by parents</p> <p>Need to communicate; parents know all about child's whole life, teachers need to too</p> <p>Parent voice, "I would fight that child's right" – no automatic regard for teacher's word</p> <p>Parents' voice increased since parents were at school themselves</p>	

Parent B 'Steve'			
Table of themes		Page number	Example quotation
Theme 1 'Locus of control'			
(i)	Times have changed	19	'Different generations'
(ii)	Teachers and schools powerless	21, 32	'can't discipline', 'school can never win'
(iii)	System to blame	49,50	'government, society, Swedes'
(iv)	Individual agency affected by circumstances	,51	'parents have to work'
(v)	Others, but not me...	4	'I can see some people would...'
Theme 2 'Circumstances'		37	'Work', 'Not eating mum?'
(i)	Pertaining to parent		'Abuse, violence, chronic neglect...'
(ii)	Pertaining to child		
(iii)	<i>Need for school to be aware of child's circumstances – communication?</i>	4,16 11-12	
Theme 3 'Change'			
(i)	At systemic level, society, rights		'it's a different world we live in'
(ii)	Discipline and respect gone		'if children learnt discipline...'
(iii)	Generational perspectives	19	'people wouldn't stand for it now'
(iv)	View of teachers/profession	20	'their word was law', 'teachers were professional people', 'who's the teachers, who's the pupils?'
		19	
		19,52	
(v)	The streets, violence and being a child today		'you can't walk down the street', 'it's an old thing - everyone says it, Copper giving you a clout round the ear'.
(vi)	Local bobby scenario		
		41, 40	
Theme 4 'Parental' voice'		44	
(i)	No automatic deference to teacher/teaching profession – down to individual teachers		'without a shadow of a doubt' 'the iron fist in the velvet glove'
		44,	
(ii)	Willingness to challenge/question	32	'I would fight that child's right' 'they're not happy' 'my parents would have just said...'
(iii)	Not well received by teachers?		
(iv)	Increasing voice	44	
		45-46	
Theme 5 'Role uncertainty?'		44	
(i)	Parents' role		'It's not that easy is it? Oh my God! 'you sort of pass them on (responsibilities) when the child goes to school
(ii)	Teachers' role		'It's the same kind of thing, isn't it?' 'because, whatever happens...', 'I don't think it ever ends'
		4,4	
		17	'They're not allowed to be children are they? 'there's all this pressure from everybody ... they get sex shoved down their throat every minute of the day ... there's so much pressure to do well at school ... I'd hate to be growing up nowadays'
(iii)	Role confusion?		
(iv)	Defining roles?		
		28	
(v)	Child's role	5,17	
(vi)	Children under siege?	40	
		40-41	

Parent C 'Stella'	
Initial list of themes	Page number
Adversity – faced and overcome, police, broken home...	1
Adoration of child – the difference? – 'amazing', 'miracle'	1
Adoration – 'they're just lovely' – 'lovely, lovely boy' the difference?	2
Adversity – OCD, autism	2
Adoration - miracle again	3
Parent attributes; understanding, compromising, nurturing	3
Adoration – will back 100% - implications for teachers...	3
Parenting is hard – 'no book' – 'whether a single parent or a judge'	4,5
Children face peer pressure, drink, drugs	5
Adversity – own childhood – break the cycle	5
Protective (over?) because of own childhood/lifetime experiences – difference?	6
Parental imperative – to be there, "I was always there"	6
Role never ends – difference?	8
Need for openness and communication, perception of 'covering-up'	8-9
Only here if bad news – need for communication - need to be 'pushy'	10-11
Parents – no hand over of responsibilities to school – because needed to face adversity; vulnerability, health, bullying etc, not even safe in previous school	11-13
Parenting = to nurture and protect – (against 'the world?')	13
Children under siege?	13
A parent is not just a parent – list of other roles, including 'teacher'	14
But a teacher is not a parent...contradictions... 'fine line'	15-16
Q what is the difference? A 'Professionalism'	16
Change – old fashioned teachers better	16
Change – older generations, own parents, teachers, more respect, authority...etc...	17
Change – circumstances, perceptions	18
Cycle of parenting	18
Locus of control – change, more people work nowadays, latch key kids, TV as baby sitter, computer games: less parenting = less respect	19
Who's at fault, who's to blame ?- OTHERS, (parents, children, police) - locus	20-21
Reference to discipline of own parents and 'local bobby' – AGAIN!	22-23
Locus, the system – 'now you'd have him sacked'	23
Empathy/recognition/acknowledgement – how hard it is to be a teacher today	24-25
Perception that teachers can be judgemental in private – feel judged	25
Fear of teachers/education system – intensity of language used	25-26
Curtain comes down between 'professionalism and parentism'	27
% Classification of good/bad teachers – all three parents have done this	28
Great respect for this school – 'brilliant'	28-29
Positive communications/feedback very welcomed	29
SPOC – single point of contact, 'the anchor' – ideally the tutor	29-30
Teachers have it harder now – the system e.g. respect, class sizes	31-33
Children have it easier now, and harder!! Contradiction Lord of the Flies scenario??	33
Parenting easier now? No-yes-no-well- circumstances, Locus of control	34
Locus...'you can't do this, you can't do that...'	35
Parents and teachers should work together, parents should back-up teachers...	37
...except, personality of teacher – 'then I'd review my opinion – no automatic reverence – DEPENDS ON INDIVIDUALS	37-38
	38

Parent C 'Stella'	
Clustering of themes	
<p>Adversity – faced and overcome, police, broken home...</p> <p>Adversity – OCD, autism</p> <p>Adversity – own childhood – break the cycle</p> <p>Parents – no hand over of responsibilities to school – because needed to face adversity; vulnerability, health, bullying etc, not even safe in previous school</p> <p>Adoration of child – the difference? – 'amazing', 'miracle'</p> <p>Adoration – 'they're just lovely' – 'lovely, lovely boy' the difference?</p> <p>Adoration - miracle again</p> <p>Adoration – will back 100% - implications for teachers...</p> <p>Parental imperative – to be there, "I was always there"</p> <p>Protective (over?) because of own childhood/lifetime experiences – difference?</p> <p>Parent attributes; understanding, compromising, nurturing</p> <p>Parenting is hard – 'no book' – 'whether a single parent or a judge'</p> <p>Role never ends – difference?</p> <p>Cycle of parenting</p> <p>Parenting = to nurture and protect – (against 'the world?')</p> <p>A parent is not just a parent – list of other roles, including 'teacher'</p> <p>But a teacher is not a parent...contradictions... 'fine line'</p> <p>Q what is the difference? A 'Professionalism'</p> <p>Children face peer pressure, drink, drugs</p> <p>Children have it easier now, and harder!! Contradiction Lord of the Flies scenario??</p> <p>Parenting = to nurture and protect – (against 'the world?')</p> <p>Children under siege?</p> <p>Need for openness and communication, perception of 'covering-up'</p> <p>Only here if bad news – need for communication - need to be 'pushy'</p> <p>Positive communications/feedback very welcomed</p> <p>SPOC – single point of contact, 'the anchor' – ideally the tutor</p> <p>% Classification of good/bad teachers – all three parents have done this</p> <p>Teachers have it harder now – the system e.g. respect, class sizes</p> <p>Empathy/recognition/acknowledgement – how hard it is to be a teacher today</p> <p>But a teacher is not a parent...contradictions... 'fine line'</p> <p>Q what is the difference? A 'Professionalism'</p> <p>Change – old fashioned teachers better</p> <p>Change – older generations, own parents, teachers, more respect, authority...etc...</p> <p>Change – circumstances, perceptions</p> <p>Parenting easier now? No-yes-no-well- circumstances, Locus of control</p> <p>Locus...'you can't do this, you can't do that...'</p> <p>the system e.g. respect, class sizes</p> <p>Locus of control – change, more people work nowadays, latch key kids, TV as baby sitter, computer games: less parenting = less respect</p> <p>Who's at fault, who's to blame ?- OTHERS, (parents, children, police) - locus</p> <p>Reference to discipline of own parents and 'local bobby' – AGAIN!</p> <p>Locus, the system – 'now you'd have him sacked'</p> <p>Parents and teachers should work together, parents should back-up teachers...</p> <p>...except, personality of teacher – 'then I'd review my opinion – no automatic reverence – DEPENDS ON INDIVIDUALS</p> <p>Empathy/recognition/acknowledgement – how hard it is to be a teacher today</p> <p>Great respect for this school – 'brilliant'</p> <p>Positive communications/feedback very welcomed</p>	

Parent C 'Stella'		
Table of themes	Page number	Example quotation
Unique parental perspective?		
(i) Adversity – faced and overcome	1,5	'all that she's come through' 'I was abused when I was a child, and I grew up very, very bitter...'
(ii) Adoration – child as 'miracle'	1	'to have Sam was a miracle...'; 'I'm proud every day that they're with me'
(iii) Need to 'protect' your child	6	'outside of school, everything'
(iv) Children under siege?	13	'the drugs, the break-ins, the violence'
Teaching/parenting roles		
(i) Multifaceted	14	'they're counsellors, they're teachers, they're doctors, nurses, whatever'
(ii) The same, but different?	15	'there's a fine line between teaching and mothering' 'I'm contradicting myself here'
(iii) Hard role for parents	4	'understanding, compromising... nurturing...I could go on forever...'
(iv) Hard role for teachers too	24	'it's very, very difficult being a teacher... it's not something you can release at 5 o'clock at night...'
Communication		
(i) Desire for openness	9	'...schools like to project it as being not perfect but smooth, you know, and cover a lot of things up
(ii) Desire for positive communication	29	'Jamie gets a little card through that says 'well done Jamie', and I think that's fantastic'
(iii) Need for single point of contact	31	'...in difficult situations, you know, that one person is an anchor'
(iv) Parental voice	11	'and if that means pushing and pushing and pushing, I will do'
Change		
(i) In teachers/teaching	16	'old fashioned teachers listen and take a pride in what they do each day'
(ii) In society	18	'there's no respect there no more'
(iii) In parenting	19	'children tend to be pushed away from parenting more than what they were'
(iv) In automatic reverence for teachers	38	'and then I'd review my options...'
(v) In what it is to be a child – 'Lord of the Flies' scenario	34	'I think it's a lot easier as in rules and regulations now because teachers haven't got the same sort of authority as what they did years ago'
Locus of control		
(i) Society to blame	19	'there's more people out at work...more children that go home to empty houses'
(ii) Others to blame	20-21	'they're going to mix with other children ...the parents swear... the police swear at the children
(iii) Discipline – 'local bobby', and own parents	23	'the local bobby caught me smoking ... and he whacked me around the ear 'ole and then went and told my mum, where she gave me one!..'

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